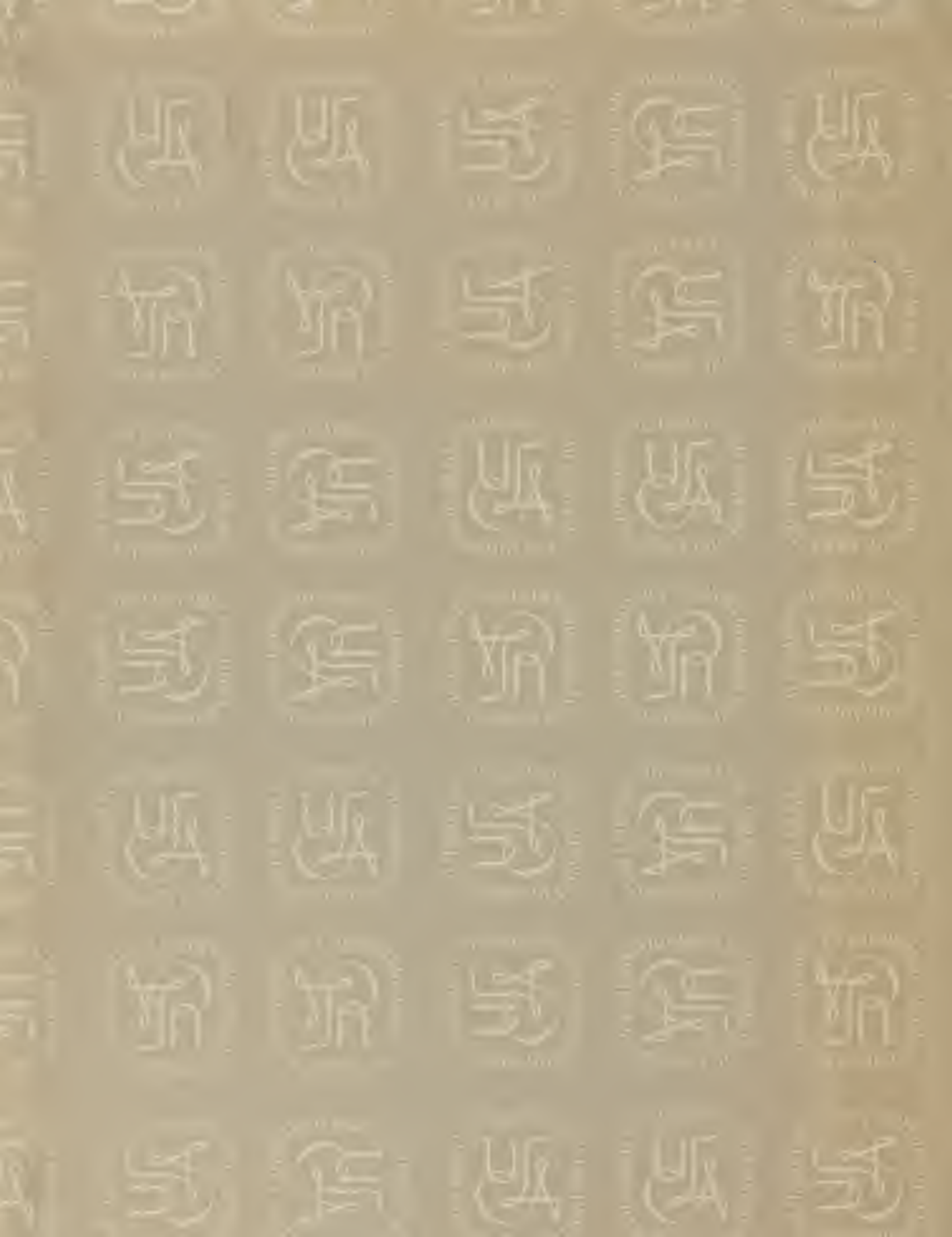

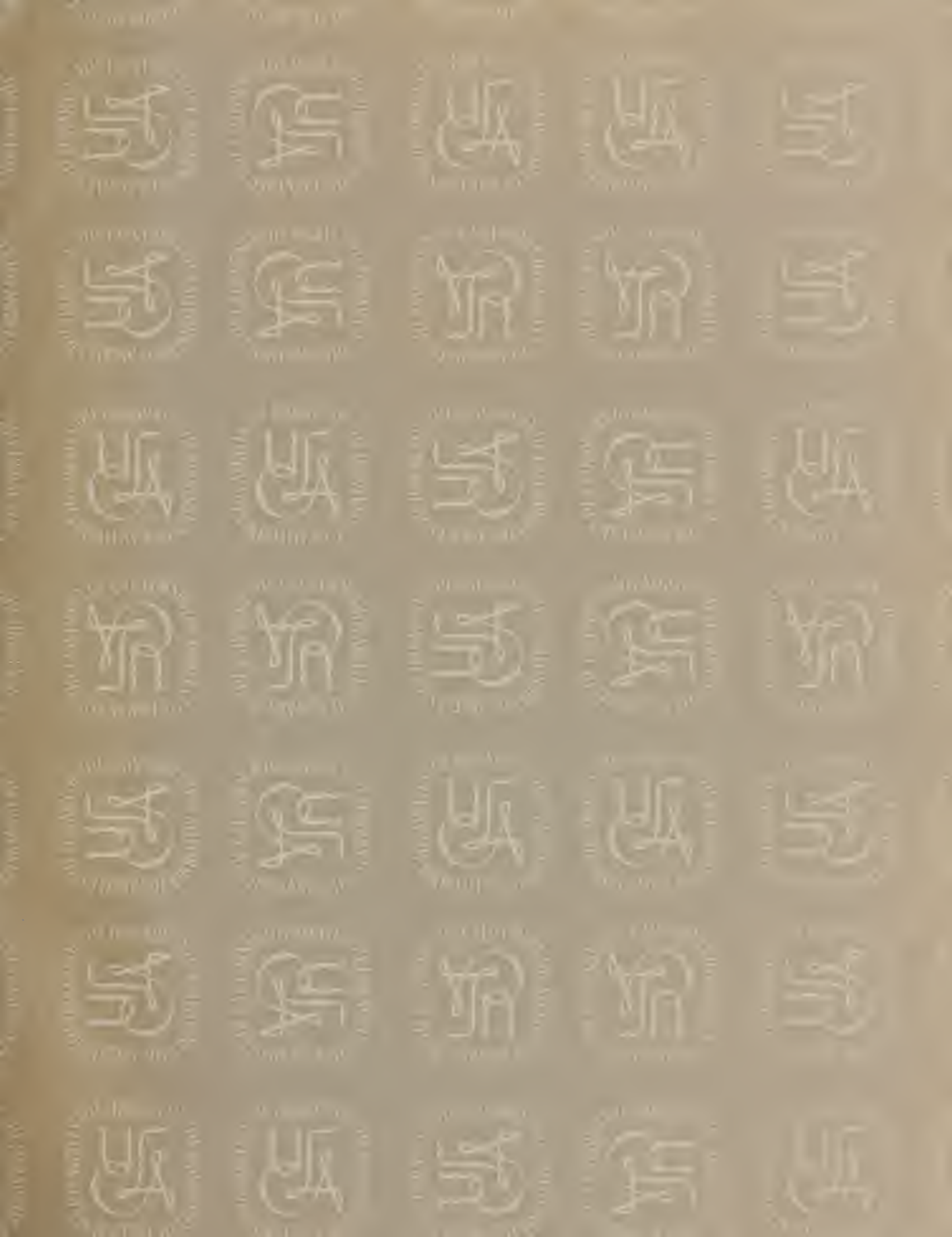

WALLACE;

OR,

THE FIGHT OF FALKIRK;

A METRICAL ROMANCE.

LONDON:

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1809.

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1809

TO

MISS GERTRUDE LOUISA ALLEN.

Oh, Friend! who hand in hand, o'er steep and vale,
Along life's path still journeyest by my side,
Content alike, if sorrow's storms assail,
Or hope and fortune shed their sun-lights wide,
With me the varied climate to abide!
Oh, Friend! thro' every change of feeling dear!
Or droops my heart, or emulant in pride,
My buoyant fancy wings her high career,
And scatters with bright glance the flimsy forms of fear.

Wilt thou reject my Muse, and scorn the song
She lov'd to weave and consecrate to thee?
No! for thy glowing cheek and faithful tongue
Say, thy heart cherishes the minstrelsy!
Then let the critic scowl with frosty eye,

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Let censure's marking finger soil the lay,
Let envy's demons, flitting thro' the sky,
Shed their dense vapour—if the Muse's ray,
And friendship's steady light, with lustre gild the day!

And deem not, jealous for our native land,
With alien step I sought the billowy Forth,
When led a pilgrim by the Muse's hand,
I climb'd the rude hills of the stormy north,
And sung her sons—their hardihood and worth!
No! as I turn again my truant eyes,
To mark the pleasant land which gave us birth,
Quick in my soul what rushing crowds arise,
Heart-cheering visions all of native sympathies!

Yes! for mine eyes first open'd on the day
In England! gem and glory of the west;
Where the light minstrel pours the unbidden lay,
Untremulous, untrampled, unoppress'd,
Pours from a free, a proud, a happy breast!
Home of the exile! Mother of the brave!
England! among the nations singly bless'd!
O'er the wide world whose arms are stretch'd to save,
Whose silver throne stands fix'd, amid the eternal wave!

Long, long, my country, may thy favour'd land
Drink at the source benign whence blessings flow!

Long may we kiss our Father's gentle hand,
And mark with moisten'd eye his sacred brow,
Bleaching in many a rugged winter's snow!
And oh! while all around the nations shake,
While ruin's wasteful whirlwinds o'er them blow,
Let not the sight our rash presumption wake,
God his Anointed loves, and spares us for his sake!

Hail George the Good! our sovereign, and our friend!
Hail christian king! Thy people's father, hail!
Oh! as thy feet life's craggy path descend,
Which from the hill-top winds into the vale,
Millions with blessings load thy evening gale!
Belov'd by England, dreaded by the foe,
Unquench'd by age, thy spirit scorns to fail;
Smiling thou bidst thy sons to battle go,
And when they fight for thee, 'tis heaven directs the blow!

PREFACE.

THE Author of the Poem now submitted to the public is conscious that it is written on a wild plan, which may lay it open on all sides to severe censure.—Shall the author, therefore, supplicate the mercy of the public, and endeavour to deprecate the ire of the critic, by a candid anticipatory confession of errors, and a pathetic enumeration of difficulties and tremors? No;—supplication only adds mortification to the punishment, which it seldom, if ever, averts.—How much must the three painful, yet ineffectual strokes which the executioner gave to the unfortunate Monmouth, have been embittered to the sufferer by the recollection of his humiliating and unsuccessful petitions!—Let, then, the author *endeavour at least* calmly to abide the sentence which shall justify exultation, or consign to shame and oblivion.

Wallace is a metrical romance, founded, indeed, on history, and frequently availing itself of the Sibyl's graver aid;—for more than this the author is not

pledged; and the reader must not be angry to find himself often wandering in the fields of fiction.

It is of little consequence to the reader whether or not the author of Wallace loves England and England's constitution and king; but it is of much consequence to the author's private feelings to declare, that no deficiency in *native* attachment directed to the choice of a subject: nevertheless, the author cannot participate in a certain degree of jealousy which seems to pervade the minds of the literary part of our countrymen towards their brethren of the north. Are they not our fellow-subjects, and should we not, therefore, exult with them in the eminent degree they hold on the scale of human importance? Surely it is time to throw aside Macklin's malignant caricature, with the contempt it deserves; since common sense tells us, it is not "by booing" that the Caledonians have obtained their very high character for military glory; it was not "by booing" that Abercrombie won the battle of Alexandria; neither will the Scotch STOOP even to us in the contest of literary merit.—Cold, taciturn, and deliberate as the Scot may seem, put a pen or a sword into his hand, and he shall strike fire with it.

WALLACE.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

WAKE not for me, ye Maids of Helicon!
Ye love to weave your perfum'd wreaths,
And pour your magic numbers,
In some soft clime, where Flora breathes,
And young Favonius slumbers;
And when ye strike your golden lyres,
'Tis pleasure, youth, or love inspires;
And on your ever smiling brows
The myrtle blossom sheds her snows,
And sighing youths and blue-eyed maids

Wander amid your sacred shades;
Nor shall my ruder step advance,
To scare ye from your raptur'd trance:
Wake not for me, ye Maids of Helicon!

II.

Dark Spirit of the northern lay,
Hear from thy misty mountain, bleak and cold!
Pour on my sight long ages pass'd away!
Shew me the deeds of old!
With thy unutterable spell
Bid this adventurous breast to swell!
Give to my awe-struck ears
The murmurs deep of long sepulchre'd years,
And to my wildly wandering eyes
Bid the dim forms of mouldering chiefs arise,
From the grey cairn's moss-mantled stone,
To those who sleep with kings—the regal dust of Scone!
Spirit of northern song!—Awake! descend;
Bend from thy misty throne—dark spirit bend!

III.

Now faint rose the distant vesper song;
Then it died on the breeze away,
For of old Dunblane, the saintly throng
Hallow'd the closing day;
Heaven's beaming arch shone clear and blue,
And the sweet broom glisten'd with chrystal dew,
And the Merle and the Mavis caroll'd free,
And the Lintwhite pour'd his melody,
And a mystic joy thro' the wild groves ran—
Yet stormy and dark was the breast of man;
And the azure sky, tho' it sparkled so,
Was big with an injur'd nation's woe!

IV.

But Nature's gentle voice is drown'd—
For hark! to the pibroch's battle sound!
Hark! to the war-steed's clattering heel!
Hark! to the warrior's clanging steel!
In the wanton breeze the standard plays,
And the mail gleams bright in the sun's last rays.

And fiercely glances many an eye
That shall ne'er see to-morrow's evening sky;
And the heart beats warm in many a breast,
Beats warm on the vigil of its rest!
For, of peaceful years, a false array
Oft flatters the hero's closing day;
And many a smile plays to deceive,
Like that which gilded St. Mary's eve!

V.

Who has not heard old Scotland's wrongs
Appeal to the vengeful sky,
When the cry of a nation's thousand tongues
Was ruin, and skaith, and misery?
When Sorrow sate in the wasted glen,
And lifted her voice, and wept in vain,
O'er the grizly heaps of slaughter'd men,
Which scatter'd their native plain.
When Tweed, all purple with vital blood,
Roll'd to the sea a horrid flood,
When the sanctuary's venerable spires
Flam'd in the conqueror's impious fires,

And blaz'd to the heavens—an offering dread
Of wrath on the crime-stain'd victor's head?
Oh! listen, just Power, to a nation's cry!
Ruin, and skaith, and misery!

VI.

And was there none—no Scottish arm,
In whose veins the native blood ran warm?
And was there no heart in the trampled land
That spurn'd the usurper's proud command?
Could the wrong'd realm no arms supply
But the slavish tear, or the abject sigh?
Had ye forgot, when Norway's host
Spread o'er old Coila's shore,
From the inhospitable coast,
What tidings Haco bore?
And how he left the invaded plain
Incumber'd with heaps of ghastly slain,
While the rest dismay'd, from the field of blood
Rush'd to their graves 'mid the bitter flood!

VII.

From Solway's oft disputed deep
To Stroma's wild and stormy isle,
From old Braidalbin's snow-crown'd steep,
Even to the pleasant braes of Kyle,
Was the cry of the country heard!
From each mountain brow, or broomy heath,
It roused her sons from their sleep of death;
Then Wallace, like a storm-cloud rose,
And roll'd back ruin on her foes,
And the soul of the spoiler fear'd!

VIII.

From Roslyn to the fields of Clyde,
With his trusty clan good St. Clair hied:
His bold heart touch'd with Scotland's shame,
Fierce from the west Lochaber came,
And with him rush'd an iron race,
As e'er look'd foeman in the face;
Nor ach'd their hardy brows to feel
The grasp severe of circling steel,

The left arm from each manly breast
With hairy targe the dart represt;
The right *but* struck the hapless foe,
Nor needed descend with second blow;
For wherever the brave Macpherson led,
The raven still hover'd o'er his head,
And whenever his clan in battle stood,
The dark bird look'd for a feast of blood.

IX.

From Galloway's wide spreading heath
The grim Macdowall joins the fight;
His high mind pondering schemes of death,
And anguish for his trampled right;
For memory stings his tortured brain
With his wasted lands and vassals slain;
Wildly he sweeps his bright claymore,
Which shall sprinkle the field with Southron gore:
On the breeze see his ancient banner wave,
Which valour won, and a monarch gave;
As he marks it float 'mid the summer sky,
New lightnings flash from his kindling eye,

And fondly he vows in his secret breast
To avenge the crown'd Lion's injured crest!

X.

The valiant blood of a noble line,
Macduff, fills that gallant heart of thine!
And wherever Scotland lifts her spear,
Be sure that the brave Macduff is there!
Young Crauford throws his bonnet by
For the steel'd helmet's glittering pride,
He couches his lance on his youthful thigh,
And rushes to war by Wallace side;
While the black scarf on his bosom spread,
Hints at a deed so dark and foul,
As gives a tongue to the silent dead,
And floods of ire to the living soul!

XI.

Proud of his youth, his strength, his name,
See Bothwell shake his snowy plume,
While the warm flush of hoped-for fame
Mingles with manhood's ripening bloom.

How strong his arm! how keen his eye!
How throbs his breast with martial fire!
He waves his gleaming steel on high,
Crying, "Havoc! for my murder'd sire!—
Old Murray, who, with traitor-blood,
Swell'd the proud waves of Fortha's flood!
Murray, who nobly closed his eye
'Mid the warrior's glorious lullaby,
Victory! Victory!"

XII.

A soft, but not inglorious cause,
Sent the brave Lord Robert to the fight;
He bends his proud head to beauty's laws,
And shakes his spear as a lady's knight;
A northern lassie's yellow hair
Holds the baron's heart in a magic snare;
Then burn, or fall, Werke's antient tower!
Your lord is away to his lady's bower;
With a plaided scarf she binds her prize,
And his war-word now is, "My Marion's eyes!"

She arms her soldier's daring hand,
Against the sons of his native land;
She smiles—farewel to kin and friends,
A glamour o'er his sight descends,
The scenes of his early youth forgot,
He thinks, and acts, and breathes, a Scot!

XIII.

Thy country's blessing on thy name
Bold fronted hero!—gallant Græme!
For her, how many of thy race
Have look'd destruction in the face!
And, or prophetic whisperings lie,
Thro' distant, dim futurity,
Thy name shall long the symbol prove
Of loyal faith, and patriot love;
Now heaven be with thee, gallant Græme!
Thy country's blessing gilds thy name!

XIV.

But see, with limbs of giant size,
Firm as his own embattled pile,

Wrath in his darkly rolling eyes,
Comes the fierce Duncan of Argyle!
His belted coat, and bonnet blue,
His tartans waving with the gale,
His broad bright axe, of temper true,
His pliant hauberk's ringing mail,
The generous Highland chief proclaim,
Aye foremost in the fields of fame:
With sprightlier cheer, in lightsome dance,
Ne'er did gallant his lady lead,
Than Duncan bade his clan advance,
O'er heaps of dying and of dead;
For sooth—to say, no harp's soft tone
Pleas'd his rough ear like a parting groan.

XV.

Ah! would the Muse could drop the tear,
Distinct, on every hero's bier!
Well pleas'd, the embalming dew to shed,
On every patriot's cherish'd head!
But many a name has envious time
Snatch'd from the fame-bestowing rhyme,

Which might have blazed on history's page,
To light this fearful, lowering age:
But man, alas! since first began
The fickle, wavering, race of man,
Thro' every clime and age the same,
Has stain'd his crest, and stoop'd to shame;
Fear'd for his land to strike the blow,
Or basely sold her to the foe!

XVI.

Yet still, in battle's stormy hour,
When fiercely fell the iron shower,
Dalziel, of ancient daring vain,
Still fronted death, and scoff'd at pain:
Jardine nor toil nor danger tired,
When honour spurred, or valour fired;
And Ramsay, thy imperial bird
Soar'd o'er the undistinguish'd herd,
Fix'd upward the unshrinking eye,
And led to death, or victory!
In many a tale of Scottish glory,
Frazier, thy name shall grace the story;

And Scrymgeour, in far distant years,
When thou art mouldering in thy grave,
Memory shall see thee thro' her tears
Thy country's sacred banner wave;
For history grave, and verse sublime,
Shall give thy deeds to latest time!

XVII.

Souls! who in Odin's gloomy hall
The horrid human goblet quaff'd,
Who triumphed at the Sister's call,
And 'mid life's parting anguish laugh'd,
Whose dark and battle-boding forms
Ride on the blast, and murmur storms,
And 'mid the cruel conflict's shock
The groans of dying heros mock;
E'en such, so bloody, wild, and dire,
Old Scotland's warriors stood—
Quick as the red wide wasting fire,
Fierce as the winter flood!

XVIII.

But yet, amid their country's wreck,
The bold, indignant band,
Bow'd for her sake, the stubborn neck,
And listen'd to a chief's command;
'Tis thus, against the rugged shore,
Old ocean's restless waters roar—
Onward they rush, but heaven's eternal laws
Stay the rash wave, the maddening billows pause!
O bright and keen is the archer's eye,
And glances the point of his feather'd dart,
As he lifts the twanging yew on high,
And aims at an English heart!
But the message of death is still deferr'd,
'Till the voice of the bold Bonkill is heard.

XIX.

And soon shall the winged mischief flee,
Bonkill; for the fight ne'er stays for thee!
Thy heart is flame, and thy steed the wind,
Oh! ne'er shall brave Stewart lag behind!

Yet the wrinkle is deep on thy manly cheek,
And thy raven locks have the silver streak,
And many a year of toil and woe
Have robb'd thy breast of the genial glow;
Unus'd, by war's rude harness press'd,
Thine eyes to sleep, and thy limbs to rest,
Thy nights are the wakeful nights of sorrow,
And darkness and doubt still veil thy morrow;
And ne'er shall thy inward conflicts cease,
'Till thou find'st a grave, or thy country peace!

XX.

Comyn, to thy secret breast give heed,
And marshal thy thoughts aright,
So heaven shall bless thy courser's speed,
As thou provest a loyal knight!
But red is thy beard, and red thine hair,
And red is thine eye's portentous glare;
Malice lurks under thy heavy brow,
Tho' the sound of thy words glides soft and slow,
And the bars of thy steeled aventayle
Cover a cheek with envy pale!

But Chief—of thy country's curse beware!
'Tis a ponderous weight for thy heart to bear—
And I would not wish mortal foeman worse,
Than his heart should be charg'd with his country's curse.

XXI.

Oh, Wallace! thy bold unruffled brow
Speaks the calm of a noble mind;
Thou hast drank of the wave at the ebb and flow,
Thou stand'st like an oak, while tempests blow.
Unbent by the wavering wind!
'Mid the bursting flame, or the midnight flood,
'Mid horror's wildest scene,
When the brooks of thy country are swollen with blood,
Unshaken, thy soul still holds her mood,
And thy brow is still serene!
In the heat of destruction's fatal day
Thy cheek it wax'd not pale,
Though the soul of a friend still flitted away
On every passing gale;
Nor on their heads, how dear soe'er,
Dropp'd from thine eye one funeral tear,

Nor heav'd thy heart one farewel sigh,
As the soldier met his destiny;
Nor private joy nor grief he knows,
Whose bosom is fill'd with his country's woes!

XXII.

Such Wallace was,—and many a year
Ere he had spirit, form, or limb,
They say, that voice of gifted seer,
'Mid tales of wonder, death, and fear,
Had prophesied of him!
Old Learmont, who, by Leader's stream,
Beneath the wan moon's sickly gleam,
Dar'd to lift his mortal eye,
To the glimmering forms which glided by—
The unborn people of futurity!

XXIII.

It was now the edge of a summer night,
And the march had been long and sore,
And each weary soldier with delight
Beheld the bright orb's softening light

Tinge the purple western shore ;
And when the halt was pass'd around,
Their tir'd limbs hail'd the gentle sound,
And each in his heart the signal bless'd,
For one short hour of rugged rest ;
For the basnet's weight their temples galls,
And fast from their brows the heat-drop falls,
And they find it sweet to close their eyes
On heather beneath the arching skies,
Tho' forbidden to loose the iron clasp
Which binds them hard in its rigorous grasp.

XXIV.

Yet dare not the leader's care-rack'd head
Court the short repose of the dewy bed ;
No, his labouring heart must still repress
The toil-balm of forgetfulness !
Then give them their glittering hour of pride,
For the scorpions of care in their bosoms creep,
And they dare not lay their woes aside
While their simple vassals sleep !
They are gone to the glen where the birken tree

Weeps over the gliding stream,
Whose waters wandering silently,
Glance in the moonlight beam;
And there, 'mid the shade of the forest deep,
The chiefs their awful council keep.

XXV.

For council, they seek the greenwood glen,
And the shade of the birken tree;
But their brows wear the frown of angry men,
And they greet right sullenly:—
Comyn has slacken'd his helmet's brace,
That the soft night wind may cool his face—
But he fixes on earth a scowling eye,
Heaven grant it speak not treachery!
Brave Stewart has lowered his lofty crest,
He has toss'd his helm on the verdant bank,
And of the whispering burnie drank,
To allay the heat of his fever'd breast;
Then lifted in scorn his manly head,
But never a word the chieftain said,

For secret pride and wrathful ire
Had set his kindling soul on fire!

XXVI.

The tumults of each rankling mind
Wallace beheld with pensive cheer;
But used to fortune's shifting wind,
He griev'd, yet did not fear!
"Say, noble chieftains, shall we dream
By this lone burnie's lulling stream,
And far from blows, and far from strife,
Here sit, and sweetly muse thro' life,
And smile to think how mad they are
Who wake the brazen note of war?
Ah! contemplation's gentle power
Shall be quickly scared from our greenwood bower,
And the steps profane of strangers rude
Shall break on our sylvan solitude!"

XXVII.

"Proud yeoman, a truce with your biting jest,"
Cried Bonkill, with reddening cheek,

" For whoever in deeds gangs first and best,
You are aye the first to speak;
Yet nor prideful gait, nor boasting words,
Shall raise ye aboon your country's lords!
Weel may yon robber scorn the land
Whose barons fight at thy command!
The winking owl, from his murky hole,
Envied the plumes of each nobler fowl,
And pluck'd from ilk bonnie birdie's breast
A feather to prank his russet crest;
Then struts from his nook in the low-roof'd byre,
And forgets who lent him his gay attire;—
Wallace! ye sprang from as rude a nest,
And may tak my tale as it likes ye best!"

XXVIII.

Red Comyn laugh'd in his canker'd heart,
Yet to manly daring slow;
He waited till Stewart had flung his dart,
To aim the second blow;
Yet he shook as he lean'd on his slender spear,
And his cheek grew livid, yet not with fear;

Then with faltering tongue he silence broke,
And thus, in wily accents, spoke—
" Wallace, thy pride has done thee wrong;
Remember thy low degree!
Go act thy part 'mid the fighting throng,
We know thou art valiant, fierce, and strong,
And our smiles shall guerdon thee;
Whilst I, the chief of a princely clan,
Lead to the field our army's van!"

XXIX.

" What! yield our army's van to thee,
Red Comyn, that may never be;
Now, by yon glittering heaven! there's not
Who breathes our air another Scot,
Red Comyn, I suspect but thee,
Of soul-defiling perfidy!
Ah! how would English Edward stare,
To see thee foremost in the war!
Has he forgot thy cringing bow?
Has he forgot thy vassal vow?
Why, Comyn, all this injured land

Beheld thee kiss the tyrant's hand,
And heard thee, on her darkest day,
Swear thy disloyal soul away!
Wash from thy front this spot of shame,
'Till then, 'twere best to lower thy aim!

XXX.

Stewart, my swelling breast would fain
The tumult of its thoughts constrain;
For strong, nor easily subdued
Is passion's lawless multitude;
E'en now they rush in rebel throng,
To choke my voice, and chain my tongue;
Yet, I would not vex thy gallant heart,
By flinging thee back thy poison'd dart;
Nor will I retort thy bitter jest,
Tho' it rankles now in my wounded breast!
Stewart! thou lovest thy country well—
And can'st thou be the foe
Of Wallace, who caught her as she fell,
And forbade her overthrow?

XXXI.

A king in chains—a trampled land,
Our chiefs, a pale, desponding band;
A people, wrong'd, despoil'd, bereft,
Nor courage, zeal, nor honour left!
Who heard the nation's dying cry?
Stewart I scorn to boast,—'Twas I!
I rallied round her banner'd tree
Her baffled, flouted, chivalry;
I led them on, our foe with fear
Gazed trembling on our fierce career—
And St. Andrew smiled from his seat in heaven,
As he saw from our fields the spoiler driven!
And Stewart, shall I be denied
The warm heart glow of honest pride?
'Tis all I ask for perils braved,
Our rescued land—our Scotland saved!

XXXII.

Now, by my father's soul I swear—
That soul, which ne'er knew guilt or fear,

And by the might of this good hand,
Which drove the invader from our land,
Nor thou, nor any Scot alive,
Shall Wallace of his right deprive;
His hard-earn'd, glorious, cherish'd right,
To stand the first in Scotland's fight!
Know, Stewart, that the sparkling star
That rose to gild my destiny,
Scatters its radiance wide and far;
Still, still it shines with steady beam,
And flings its long and brilliant stream
O'er the dark passage to futurity!
Still shall its lustre lead me on,
Still many a glorious day be won;
Nor will I drop my lofty ken
On the low views of little men!
Chosen to avert a nation's fate,
How can *I* stoop my thoughts to envy, spleen, or hate?"

XXXIII.

He ceas'd, yet still his heaving breast
Hard 'gainst the binding corslet press'd;

His eye of fire, his crimson cheek,
The tumult of his feelings speak;
O'er his plum'd brow the moon-beams dance,
And seem to sport with his light'ning glance;
For still, on his undissembling face,
Each strong emotion stands confess'd,
And little recks he who may trace
The thoughts of his noble breast:
No sheltering helm, no visor's bar,
Cover his cheek from the hail of war;
His bonnet of green conceals from sight
His morion small, of metal light;
And black waves the plume o'er his lofty brow,
A dark death sign to the trembling foe!

XXXIV.

Then great Macduff and gallant Græme,
With hearts of fire, and eyes of flame,
Disturb'd the sullen pause;
"For shame, for shame, ye Scottish Lords!
If all the aid your zeal affords
Be low cabals and wrangling words,

Farewel our country's cause!
Methinks, brave nobles, it were best
To rid us of yon irksome guest;
Then ye may waste each sunshine day
In scoffing all your spleen away;
Then ye may wage your wordy wars,
Your lady fights, and selfish jars;—
Nay, even now—if words delight,
Stay here and talk—we rush to fight!
Wallace, Saint Andrew be our speed!
Away! and dauntless be thy lead,
Even to the misty borders of eternity,
For by old Scotland's wrongs, her sons shall follow thee!"

XXXV.

Young Bothwell, careless, brave, and proud,
Saw the faint gleam of rancour break
O'er wily Comyn's livid cheek,
And spoke his thoughts aloud:
"What, is the day forgot and gone,
When Ormsby held his courts at Scone;
That day, which saw our Monarchs' graves
Trampled and spurned by foreign slaves;

While each august, insulted shade,
Implor'd from sons supine the lingering aid?
What, is the English coward flown?
Freed are the ancient towers of Scone?
Dust of our sires! once more repose
Untrod, unmock'd by impious foes!
But see! the spirits of the mighty dead
Still hover o'er their just avenger's head!
They hear ye from their clouds, ye wrangling train!
Ye violate their tombs, ye break their sleep again!

XXXVI.

Grey Cambuskenneth!—hoary pile!
Which towering 'mid the pride of years,
Hast gleam'd to many a summer's smile,
And frown'd 'mid many a winter's tears;
Oh! what a day of boast was thine,
How did thy glimmering turrets shine,
When Wallace, rushing from thy height,
Put England to the flight!
Then Cressingham, we pour'd thy blood
To the dark raven's screaming brood!
Then Warenne turn'd his courser's head—

Swift from the field the veteran fled!
Ah! better had our Scottish spears
Closed a long train of honour'd years!
Not such my gallant father's heart,
It bore him nobly thro' his part;—
The brave old man ne'er turn'd his face
From any peril but disgrace!—"
Young Bothwell paused, choked by a tide
Of filial love and filial pride;
Nor dared the rudest soldier sneer,
Tho' on his downy cheek sparkled the unbidden tear!

XXXVII.

Now swift, and swifter on the ear
Came the rattling hoof of an armed steed;
It came with the breathless haste of fear,
Or urgency of need;
And now the ferny brake is pass'd,
And the tangling boughs are dash'd aside,
And he who rode thro' the wood so fast,
Halts in the birken glen at last,
Where the wimpling waters glide:

" Now hail—now hail Sir Adam Currie!
What tidings do ye bring?
Your courser's plight bespeaks your hurry;
Where is yon robber King?"

XXXVIII.

" Now hail—now hail each gallant knight!
I bring ye a merry tale;
Troth I have spied a bonny sight
In old Linlithgow's vale!
A pageant, meet to fire the bold,
And make the coward's blood run cold!
Nay even I, (tho' by the rood,
No breath of fear e'er chill'd my blood)
Yet I will tell ye true;
When first yon lion King I saw,
My bosom heaved 'twixt hate and awe,
Suspended at his view;
Methought a more than mortal grace
Beamed on the regal warrior's face!
But soon my heart began to burn,
Revenge and wrath soon took their turn,

When I saw the rays of the western sun
Play 'mid the gorgeous folds of Durham's Gonfalon!

XXXIX.

Now God and St. Mary give ye might,
And rouse your souls to the coming fight!
May your arm be strong, and your sword be good,
For to-morrow shall prove a day of blood!"
Brave Stewart starts from his gloomy mood,
" Thank heaven! at length the hour appears,
When copious streams of English blood
Shall wash out the stain of Scotland's tears!
Wallace, it seems 'tis now o'er late
To sum up our debts of love or hate;
Let them yield to the aweful voice of fate,
And sleep in each haughty breast;
But oh! in to-morrow's hottest strife,
Let heaven but spare *me* strength and life,
Thou shalt not fight the best!
Here let our vain contentions end,
This hour, who serves my country is my friend!

XL.

Comyn, awake! 'tis a glorious hour!
Comyn, awake, arouse!
And by our country's guardian power,
I charge thee smooth thy brows!
Oh, Comyn! all this world of toys,
With all its grandeurs, all its joys,
Its pride, its ancestry, its might,
All sink like bubbles from my sight!
Devour them, Time! Yet let me save
From the wide wreck, a glorious grave!
Nay, e'en resentment's pungent smart,
That clings so closely to the heart,
The pomp of place, of wealth, of blood,
Sink all before old Scotland's good!
My country take the sacrifice—
And may thy rescue be the price!"

XLI.

Wan is the cold and watery ray
Which sheds a pale and joyless day

Thro' November's cloudy sky,
Yet fainter, ghastlier was the smile,
Than wintry gleams on Westra's isle,
Of Comyn's hollow eye!
I have mark'd the gloomy brow of scorn,
I have traced the sneer of guile,
But the darkest frown by malice worn
Was mock'd by Comyn's smile!
Yet Stewart, generous, brave, and kind,
Saw not this meteor of the mind,
And their iron hands the chieftains join'd.
Then from Torwood's green and shadowy brake
They stride to the heath where their vassals lie,
To bid their clustering thousands wake,
And prepare for victory:
Comyn arrays his valiant throng,
Of armed horsemen, fleet and strong;
And Stewart cries to his archers good,
"See that your arrows be keen and bright,
For their barbed points shall be dipp'd in blood
Ere ye sleep to-morrow night!"

XLII.

Macduff and Murray in the van
Are rousing each his sturdy clan,
And many a shout and loud huzza
Hails the faint streak of dawning day:
Nor thought of death, or wounds, or flight,
One sanguine heart oppress'd;
Tumultuous hope, and wild delight,
And burning zeal, and courage bright,
Throb'd in each ardent breast.
Stewart beheld the fervour rise,
And raised to heaven his glowing eyes,
And thus the hero prayed:
"Oh God of battles! Truth and Zeal
Make to thy throne their loud appeal,
And shall they want thy aid!
No! the dread spirit of thy wrath
Shall light us thro' the rugged path,
'Till our loved land shall rise again,
Brighter from sorrow's transient stain;
Then, wrongs reveng'd, and Scotland free,
Peace, long lost, exiled peace, shall smile on victory!

XLIII.

While each brave leader cheers his men,
We'll return to Torwood's leafy glen,
For there, beside the glassy rill,
Wallace and Græme are lingering still;—
But what the lonely heroes say,
Or why in the arching shade they stay,
Is the secret of another day;
For the Muse now drops her flagging wing,
And my northern harp has lost a string,
And the weary bard must rest awhile,
Ere again he claims your ear, again he woos your smile.

END OF CANTO THE FIRST.

WALLACE.

CANTO THE SECOND.

I.

Sages have said, and fools have found,
That life is but a joyless round,
That fate in wrath has lent to man
A struggling, striving, sorrowing span;
His bitter cup still overflows
With public wrongs or private woes,
Domestic ills, a sullen train,
Perplex his heart, and rack his brain;
While he whom angry stars have hurled,
'Mid the rude tempests of the world,

Whose aching, feverish, anxious breast,
Ne'er feels the balm of humble rest;
Oh! let but reason intervene,
How does he hate the weary scene!
He lowers awhile his lofty eye
To unmolested penury,
And views with envious heart the hind
In turfy Sheelin laid, rock'd by the northern wind!

II.

Rude is our passage to the tomb,
But does no radiance pierce the gloom?
Methinks a mild, unwavering blaze,
Sheds daylight on the darksome maze;
On the lone hovel's roof it rests,
And warms the shivering inmates breasts;
The king, who feels it at his heart,
Drops of his cares the heavier part;
With it the steel-clad bosom knows
Its dearest moments of repose;
Hail, friendship! since the world began,
Heaven's kindest, noblest boon to man!

All other joys, with meteor fire,
Quench'd in the mists of time, expire;
But thou, unhurt by fortune's blast,
Shin'st brightest, clearest, at the last!
The dreary heart, unwarm'd by thee,
Broods o'er a sullen destiny;
Heaven's fairest gifts would fail to bless
That cold and wintry haunt of cheerless selfishness!

III.

Wallace in sober mood revolves
High soaring hopes and deep resolves;
Sees victory gain'd, the day his own,
A native monarch on the throne,
And hears his much-lov'd country shed
A thousand blessings on his head!
'Twas a gay dream,—the voice of Græme
Dispers'd it, and it fled away,
As flies from Hesper's ruddy beam
The mists of early day:
As its accents came to Wallace' ear,
They sounded with half their wonted cheer,

And when he rais'd his speaking eye,
It sparkled with half the usual joy,
For who so blythe as the gallant Græme,
When he stood on the edge of the hour of fame!
But now, a strange, unwelcome guest,
O'erclouds his brow, and chills his breast;
His generous heart disdain'd to bear
The ponderous weight of untold care;
Tho' half ashamed, his lips confess
His fancy's dreary dreams, his bosom's heaviness.

IV.

"Wallace, in many a busy hour
We have look'd on death together,
We have seen the fiercest war-clouds lower,
Stood calm 'mid many an iron shower,
And mock'd the pelting weather;
And smil'd to see our burnish'd mail
Turn the thick storm of arrowy hail;
For still, wherever Wallace trod,
My foot as firmly press'd the sod;
My heart's first boast, my dearest pride,

To stand or fall by Wallace' side!
How wilt thou marvel then to hear,
That gossip tales and baby fear,
Sleep's flimsy shades—night's mockeries,
With magic film delude my eyes,
'Till to my heart the future seems
Crowded with sanguine forms, a scene of ghastly dreams?

V.

Nay, Wallace, smile not on thy friend;
'Tis pressing on a thorn:
Chide, and thy voice shall not offend;
But Græme endures not scorn!
Of late in grey Kincardine's tower,
Subdued by slumber's welcome power,
In willing thrall I lay,
When to my eyes a phantom rose,
Which scared the angel of repose,
And fill'd me with dismay:
All shivering, wan, and smear'd with blood,
Close to my couch Sir Patrick stood;
His pale, pale cheek and clotted hair,

His hollow eyes' unearthly glare,
Appall'd my senses, from my brow
The beads of fear began to flow;
The phantom shook its gory head—
'Art thou a Græme?' it sternly said,
'Art thou a Græme? And does thine eye
Shrink to behold war's livery?
The Fates, enamour'd of our name,
Loudly demand another Græme;
Thy death-word is pronounced on high,
The last of all thy fields is nigh!
Farewel, thy task shall soon be o'er;
We meet ere long, to part no more!'

VI.

But ere he melted from my view,
His hands a sable curtain drew:
Oh, Wallace! what a scene was there!
Memory e'en now recoils with fear;
Half drown'd in seas of Scottish blood,
And struggling 'mid the horrid flood
Our mangled thousands lay;—

These very men, who warm in life
Pant to begin the deadly strife,—
Fond haste! to-morrow's evening ray
Shall see their glory pass'd away!
Stewart, of name and lineage proud,
Lay mingled with the bleeding crowd;
In the midst, a spectre, sad and wan,
Lean'd on a broken spear,
Quick from his breast the life-blood ran—
I gazed upon the dying man,
Amazement banish'd fear,
For in act, in garb, in face the same,
Gasping his latest breath, I saw thy comrade Græme!

VII.

I sprang from my couch as the dawn arose,
And thought in my restless mind,
That the grizly forms of vex'd repose
Would flee from the morning wind;
And I climb'd to the brow of the upland heath,
To taste of the gale the freshest breath;
A cloud was on Craig Rossie's brow,

Dark gloom'd Kincardine's towers below,
And the winding Ruthven's ripling swell
Murmur'd low on mine ear, 'Farewel! farewel!'
Then I thought on thee and thy loyal tryste*
And I sprang on my berry-brown steed,
That it might not be said that Græme was miss'd
In the hour of Scotland's need;
But still as I rode, I turn'd me round,
To list to the Ruthven's mournful sound,
And thou can'st not think how its voice was dear,
When its last faint murmur met mine ear!
For prophetic was my answering sigh
To the stream which I lov'd in infancy!"

VIII.

"By heaven!" cried Wallace, "yonder foe
Has bribed some demon of the night,
To chill thy bosom's generous glow,
Unstring thy right arm for the blow,
And blunt the sword of our worthiest knight!

* Appointed meeting.

But blush not, man! a goblin tale
Oft makes the hero's cheek turn pale;
Oft has my sleep been vex'd and cross'd
By wailing sprite, or grizly ghost,
'Till gazing on the shadows grim,
Spell-bound, I've shook in every limb;
But when arose the welcome day,
The cowards shun'd the piercing ray,
And reason whistled them away;
But see, where the warlock rowan* bends,
And offers its mystic aid,
For 'tis said, that the helm which its leaf defends
Shall mock the temper'd blade."
Then smiling, he tore a branch in haste,
And fast in the helm of his comrade placed,
And tho' little of warlock aid he reck'd,
With the powerful plant his bonnet deck'd.

IX.

"Oh, Græme! my brother, and my friend,
The dawn is creeping on,

* Mountain ash.

And thou or I may meet our end
Ere this day's work is done;
Or by the cozie ingle side
Thro' tame old age may safely glide;
But this we know—no coward slave
Shall ever sleep in either grave;
Yet lest life's wintry eve *be* ours,
Let's cut out talk for tedious hours,
While still our proudest theme shall be,
The tale of this day's victory!
Our trampled fields refuse to give
Yon lawless plunderers means to live,
And their wasted forms will but afford
Half triumph to the hungry sword;
But heaven is weary—to the skies
The cries of ravaged nations rise;
Yon Cambrians, harness'd to the yoke,
Their bloody chains have rudely broke,
For every sigh of the summer wind,
And every groan of the distant flood,
Brings to each gall'd and fetter'd mind
Their weeping country left behind,

And Conway's waves of blood;
Wrapt in grey mists, 'mid the evening gale,
White-bearded prophets dimly sail,
And our mountain echoes, sad and faint,
Seem Hoel's mournful harp, and Hoel's mild complaint.

X.

Poor Cambria! lost, insulted land,
Crush'd by a tyrant's ruthless hand,
Woe is my heart for thee!
Thy banner rent, thy name a wreck,
And each brave son's degraded neck
Harness'd to slavery!
See, Græme, yon reddening eastern sky
Gives promise of a golden day,
My heart is blythe, my hopes are high;
Time chides us as we loitering stay,
And bids us form our bold array;
Myself will lead old Scotland's van,
Where many a tried and loyal clan
Shall lift the unconquer'd spear:
The noble Stewart shall oppose,

With Selkirk shafts, the English bows,
While Comyn leads our horse, and combats in the rear."

XI.

A jealous pang Græme's bosom cross'd,
As Wallace thus dispos'd the host—
" And has the glorious field of fame
No post of trust, for slighted Græme?"
" Impetuous soldier! by the tie
Of sweet, unforc'd fraternity;
By radiant honour, dearly bought;
By all our fields, together fought;
E'en conquest's self, unshar'd by thee,
Would smile like half a victory!
Now mark me, Græme—when on the plain
Which shall bear the battle's bloody stain,
Our patriot numbers stand,
In four close schiltrons, sharp and bright,
I have chosen my station on the right,
On the left do thou command;—
Fife's youthful Earl and Bothwell true
The centre fight shall lead,

While Bonkill's scatter'd archers strew
The field with English dead!
Now speed thee, Græme, and bid them on,
Wallace will join the march anon;
But ere this day's rude work begin,
'Tis meet he should consult the monitor within!"

XII.

Then Græme dismiss'd the transient gloom,
And shook, well pleased, his shadowy plume;
He pois'd his spear, and grasp'd his shield,
And turn'd him towards the crowded field;
But the dark bird sate on the oak,
And loaded the gale with his sullen croak;
On heavy wing, in cow'ring flight,
The rowan he snatch'd from the helmet bright;
Then flew from the chieftain's eager gaze,
Which follow'd his course in deep amaze!
E'en Wallace felt his cheek turn pale,
And his heart for doubt began to fail;
Græme cheerly smil'd on his faltering friend,
"Tis well! Fate warns me of my end!

Another hour of toil and sorrow,
Sleep, tranquil sleep, is mine to-morrow!"
Then he strode away, and the woodland rang
With his ponderous armour's iron clang.

XIII.

Then Wallace whistled loud and shrill,
He whistled loud and long,
He listen'd, but all around was still,
Save the hum of the martial throng:
Then he step'd in haste tow'rds an arching glade,
Where the flaunting wild-rose crept,
There, on moss couch supinely laid,
Like færy tenant of the shade,
His page serenely slept;
His brow was as the blossom white,
Which decks May's scented thorn,
And his velvet cheek was blushing bright,
And glowed like a summer morn;
And his ringlets waved with a yellow gleam,
Like the golden sands of Glengeber's stream:
A gallant steed, to the rowan tied,

Grazed by the slumbering page's side;
Wallace, impatient, cried amain,
"What ho! my page! arise!
Meet follower in a warrior's train,
Come, ope thy baby eyes!"

XIV.

Loud was the call—sleep, frighted, fled—
The urchin rais'd his bonnie head,
And started from his mossy bed;
"Alas! the night was long and drear!
I sank oppress'd by sleep and fear;
O'er my dull eyes soft slumbers crept,
And ere I wist my senses slept."
"'Tis well, poor urchin; fear not me;
This is no time to chide;
David, I grieve to part with thee,
But love, not wrath, signs the decree,
And drives thee from my side:
Rude as I am, my melting heart
Would surely act the woman's part,

To see some ruffian hand destroy
So fragile, and so fair a toy!
No—to Dundaff in haste repair—
Græme has secur'd thy welcome there;
There, safe amid the peaceful shades,
Ensnare the birds, and woo the maids;
My time far different labours claim,
When Wallace hunts, he follows glorious game!"

XV.

From David's cheek the roses fled,
In silence droop'd his languid head;
The tear-drop glisten'd in his eyes,
His heart swell'd high with rapid sighs,
And vainly strove the boy to hide
Impetuous sorrow's gushing tide:
"How now, my boy? Why this alarm?
I pray thee be content!
Dundaff shall hide thee safe from harm,
Howe'er betide the event;
And sure thy harmless being's date

Can ne'er provoke the sword of hate;
E'en should I fall, those bonnie eyes of thine
Shall win thee other friends, and gentler tasks than mine.

XVI.

One last request, my pretty boy,
I make thee ere we part:
Take hence this pledge of vanish'd joy;
The warrior scorns the idle toy,
And tears it from his heart!
She whom it bids me think upon
Was once a hero's bride;
Pale, pale as the moonlight beam she shone;
'Twas a wavering light, and quickly gone;
It sparkled awhile, and died!
In her silent grave the lady slept,
And dark and stern was the warrior's mood,
And long and bitterly he wept;
But his tears were tears of blood!
For the souls which darken'd his vital beam
He plunged in death's cold and bitter stream,
And many a widow rues the hour

That snapt the stem of that warrior's flower!
Then mercy died, and frantic ire
With human victims fed the fire;
Sweet Agnes lean'd from her sapphire skies,
And saw the fatal volumes rise,
And her spirit drank in heaven, a husband's sacrifice!

XVII.

Thou tremblest, boy!—the tale severe
Harshly smites thy infant ear;
Nor can thy waxen breast suppose
The horrid joy revenge bestows!
Thou hast not lov'd, and canst not tell
What hell-born tortures, fierce and fell,
That warrior's bosom tore,
When savage guile, in evil hour,
Crush'd his pale lily in her bower,
And bade it bloom no more!
'Twas not the grief of a single breast,
Pity became a general guest;
The rudest soldier's heart of stone
Claim'd half the anguish for his own;

The hardy Græme awhile forgot the man,
And down his rugged cheek the infant sorrows ran!

XVIII.

Oh, David! while I writhed in woe,
I knew the hand that sent the blow,
And own'd the just, tho' hard, decree
Of stern unveering destiny!
I was not born to bask in joy,
A loitering, sighing, amorous boy;
Love's April sky, the smile and tear,
Usurp'd the warrior's sterner year,
And rust had crept o'er his idle spear—
But the pealing thunder, loud and deep,
Burst rudely on inglorious sleep!
David, this scarf, the gift of love,
Sweet Agnes' ivory fingers wove;
Perchance, ere the end of this day's fight,
The bosom it guards may be dull and cold,
And a ruffian's gory hands, ere night,
Might stain the silken fold;
Nay, the secret voice of martial pride

Bids me throw the cherish'd toy aside;
For I would not be found in my country's wreck,
With a love-knot twin'd around my neck!
Now hence, my boy, and peace benign
Guard with her silver wings that gentle head of thine!"

XIX.

Whose is the form, so gaunt and drear,
That frowns by Wallace' side,
Drinking, with cold and frozen ear,
The tale of his murder'd bride,
O'er whose eyes a glassy lustre plays,
Wintry and dim, like a dead man's gaze;
On whose pale lip the vital breath
Comes faint and chill, like the damps of death?
Sure some grim prisoner of the tomb
Has dared to break his dungeon's gloom!
Methinks so haggard, cold, and wan,
Ne'er stood on earth a living man!
That form was clad in weeds forlorn,
By berries stain'd, by brambles torn;
As the mild breeze of morning sigh'd,

It waved in tatters long and wide,
And with a rugged cord the unseemly garb was tied!

XX.

When Wallace beheld that form so drear,
A chill through his heart-blood ran;
He guess'd 'twas the shuddering touch of fear,
For he could not endure the glance austere
Of that dark mysterious man!
"Now, by Saint Fillan's arm!" he said,
"I charge thee speed away!
Go, moulder amid the churchyard shade,
Where those lank limbs in dust have laid
And silence many a day!
By the dank charnel's vaporous steam,
By those dim eyes which bluely gleam,
I know full well,
That form from earth has long been gone,
And well I ween survives there none
Who heard thy passing bell!
This know I by the dew-drops cold
That bathe my shuddering brow,

For never man of earthly mould
Might bid those drops to flow!"

XXI.

A dreary, dark, malignant smile,
Wrinkled the old man's cheek the while—
" Lo! Scotland's champion—Wallace, fears!
The heart of battle views dismay'd
The feeble wreck of lingering years,
A penance-wasted shade!
But fear me not—my days of crime
Fled with my unreturning prime!
Since him thou seest began to be,
A hundred years have pass'd,
And I hoped that each, by destiny
Was mark'd to be the last!
Pierce with thy spear my body thro',
No crimson drop of life would flow;
Touch me!—lo! cold as the marble stone!
Life's kindly warmth is chill'd and gone,
Yet still the grave opes not for me,
I cannot, cannot cease to be!

XXII.

Wallace, were this some charnel-vault,
I would breathe in thy shuddering ear
The withering tale of the hideous fault
That call'd for a doom so drear;
But should I the dark, dark deed declare,
'Twould pollute the pure and genial air!
When all but the wolf and the murderer rest;
When the ruffian stands by his sleeping guest;
When the wild gust shakes the lonely tower,
And horror claims the midnight hour;
When on the churchyard vapours, sail
Uncertain forms and visions pale—
Then 'twere a time for such a tale!"
Then he waved a ghastly hand of bone—
That ghastly hand was long and bare,
Nor flesh, nor blood, nor nerves were there;
'Twas the hand of a wasted skeleton—
And that accurs'd right hand the nameless deed had done!

XXIII.

" Hated of heaven, and shunn'd of man,
Where could I hide my head?
To the void wilderness I ran,
And howling, call'd the lightnings wan
Their blue death-gleam to shed;
If I touch'd the soft green leaf of spring,
It crumbled and shrank like a blasted thing!
I pluck'd the fresh lily from the dell,
A horrid blood-drop stain'd the bell!
If I bent my lip to the fountain clear,
The chrystal wave would disappear,
And a sanguine tinge the waters wear!
Wild with despair and frantic rage,
I vow'd a dismal pilgrimage;
Wherever the giant crimes of yore
Had stain'd this land with human gore,
My restless foot was sworn to explore:—
I climb'd that rude and grass-grown path
That leads to Gilcomgain's ruin'd rath,*
And many a wild and ghastly hour

* A fortress.

I spent in Finella's fatal tower;
I have laid me on the treacherous bed
Whence Duncan's gentle spirit fled,
And stood, undaunted and unscared,
By night on the dusky plain of haunted Monivaird!

XXIV.

Day follow'd day—year roll'd o'er year,
And I look'd for rest from the penance drear—
'Mid the western main, in a lonely isle,
Nod the black walls of a fire-scath'd pile;—
There did I make my heather-bed,
There did I hide my wretched head:
'Tis a grim haunt, and meet to be
The goal of wandering misery!
For over its head the storm-cloud scowls,
And its fragments rock as the deep wind howls,
And the vex'd spirit of the waves
Around its foot incessant raves;
There many a death-cry's wild complaint
Floats on the sobbing blast,
It comes on the ear so sad and faint

'Till the drowning agony is past,
And the sound in silence sinks amid the wat'ry waste.

XXV.

To live unpitied and forgot,
My life a blank, my name a blot,
Was all I ask'd of heaven:
Despair had still'd my stormy breast,
A dreary frost had chain'd to rest
Its waves by passion driven!
But this was mercy—soon there fell
(But how or when I cannot tell)
A fatal influence* o'er my soul,
Which holds it still in dread controul:—
Then, sleep, insatiate destiny!
From thy black phial thou hast shed
The choicest drop upon this head
Of human misery!

* The second sight.

XXVI.

As I sate on my rock, 'mid the weltering main,
Strange visions came to my wilder'd brain;
Wild forms and ghastly shapes arose,
And told dark tales of human woes;
Sometimes they spread before my sight
The tumult of the distant fight;
No secret murderer whet his knife,
No struggling victim sued for life,
But mine ear was fill'd with the wailing cry,
And the gushing life-stream met mine eye:
Avenging fate forgot not me,
But sent a demon brood,
Of crimes and evils yet to be,
To break my solitude!

XXVII.

When the merry harp and the pibroch rung,
When wassel flow'd, and minstrels sung
In old Dumfermline's hall;
When fair Joleta led the dance,
I saw that grizly guest advance,

Who stopt the mirth of the bridal ball!
Many a gallant on his lady's ear
Left half his guileful tale untold;
For that withering stranger's glance austere
Made e'en the lover's heart turn cold!
As the spectre glided 'mid the throng,
Each faltering minstrel hush'd his song;
The pallid gleam of the corpse-fire's light
Usurp'd the blaze of the torches bright;
On beauty's cheek the rose-buds died,
And the primrose wan their place supplied:
None knew the unwelcome stranger's name,
Whither he went, nor why he came;
He came, to breathe in a monarch's ear,
A solemn death-call, deep and drear!

XXVIII.

Who is it that rides thro' the night so fast,
'Mid the driving sleet and the howling blast?
Oh! the way is steep, and the orb of night
Has hidden in clouds her guiding light!
Headlong he falls from the craggy rock!

Mine ear yet rings with the clanging shock—
Far, far away, in my ruin'd pile,
'Mid the stormy waves of a lonely isle,
I mark'd on Scotland's saddest day
The spot where her mangled father lay!
The maiden blossom of the north,
Like a pale snow-drop glinted forth,
Then closed its scarcely open'd bell,
Felt the keen blast, and shivering fell!
The north-wind sobs where Margaret sleeps,
And still in tears of blood her memory Scotland steeps!

XXIX.

Unreal forms abused my mind,
Unreal voices fill'd the wind,
Each howling blast that swept the sea
Brought some mysterious tale to me:
Frantic, I sought from scenes like these
Relief in real miseries!
Since to the world I fled again,
I chose thee out from living men,
To search thy bosom's inmost shrine,

To know each half-breath'd word of thine;
I saw thee, when the warlock's call
Shook to the base Gask's ruin'd hall;
And I knew, by the wild unearthly tone,
By whom that spectre horn was blown!
Wallace! I have search'd the page of fate,
I have number'd the hours of thy being's date!
But see where yon vulture wheels around,
He calls his mate to the battle ground;
There shall a costly feast be spread,
A feast of woe shall Scotland see,
For yon bird shall gorge on the life-stream red,
Of the flower of our country's chivalry!"

XXX.

"Hence, trembling Warlock! false and base!
Wallace abhors thy babbling race!
Ye hoary messengers of harm,
Prophets of woe and death,
Fain would ye wither the hero's arm
With your chill and blasting breath!
The book of fate I cannot read,
But well I guess 'tis there decreed,

Whenever my years shall find an end,
Scotland shall mourn a vanish'd friend,
My bones shall sleep in an honour'd grave,
And my name shall live with the good and brave!"

XXXI.

The old man smil'd—" Thy bones shall have
A wandering and unquiet grave;
No stone shall mark thy place of rest,
No sod shall cover thy mouldering breast;
In dust thy corse shall never lie,
Thine is a soaring destiny!
Like thy aspiring soul, thy dauntless form
Shall float amid the skies, and sail amid the storm!"

XXXII.

" Now, wizard—I conjure thee, tell,
Amid thy secrets dark and fell,
(If to the end of this day's fight
Thine eye extends its mystic sight)
If, 'mid the waste of Scottish blood,
Græme's vital stream must swell the flood?"

" The Sisters ope the fatal shears,
Its latest sand his hour-glass wears ;—
To-morrow night, o'er proud Dundaff,
A funeral cloud shall sail,
And death's black flag on the banner-staff
Shall wave to the sullen gale!
Yea, art thou pale, because the gust
Shall scatter a little human dust?
Short-sighted man! the dreaded blow
Which lays thy gallant comrade low,
Is Mercy's gift.—How would his eye
Endure the ghastly train to see,
Of scorns and wrongs, which destiny
Has heap'd to pour on thee?
Time glides away on footsteps fleet,
Then, valiant chief, farewel!
Remember this voice, for when next we meet
It shall toll thy passing bell!"

XXXIII.

Then Wallace looked all around—
He stamp'd with his foot on the solid ground,

And scarce could he tell, if indeed he stood
'Mid the leafy glens of green Tor-wood,
Or if some dark malignant sprite
In glamour mist had veil'd his sight;
But his ear still rang with the dread adieu,
And he felt the fearful warning true:
He heard the distant war-horn sound,
His gallant courser paw'd the ground,
And seem'd, with his summons loud and deep,
To bid him awake from his mystic sleep,
For the noble beast was bred to war,
And had heard the bugle sound afar:
Then Wallace sprang in his lofty seat,
And plac'd his spear in rest,
And smil'd as he felt the pulses beat
To arms in his manly breast;—
"Oh! fate!" he cried, "prepare thy worst,
Thy malice I defy!
For of Scottish men, the best and first,
Shall Wallace live or die!"
Then he prick'd the sides of his prancing steed,
And rush'd thro' the wood with lightning's speed!

XXXIV.

As Wallace pass'd the arching glade,
Stooping, he check'd his courser's pace,
For the tangling boughs of the pendant shade
Had torn his plume and scarr'd his face;
But when he lifted his head anon,
A cheering pageant spied he,
Across the plain stout marching on,
Of the flower of Scotland's chivalry;—
At first in wrath his breast he cross'd,
For he thought 'twas the rear of his lingering host,
And vowed a vow in his hasty mind
Never again to halt behind;
And marvel'd that Græme, the fierce and bold,
Had led his men with zeal so cold;
Troth, but his heart was light and gay,
When he knew by the rude, yet firm array,
That these were the men of Galloway,
Who had cross'd the swelling waves of Clyde,
To quell the English robber's pride;
Two leaders, ardent, keen, and strong,
Led to the field the valiant throng;

These chiefs forsook their bleak domain,
To join Macdowall's patriot train;
Sir Adam Gordon, old in fight,
Still lov'd the fray like a youthful knight,
And martial Carrick's eye of fire
Proclaim'd the worthy son of many a warlike sire!

XXXV.

Marching eastward o'er the heath
Flash'd many a glittering lance,
And the well-known banner of Menteith
Met Wallace' joyful glance;
Three hundred horse, a dazzling train,
Sparkled gaily on the plain;
Wallace spurr'd on, his hopes were high,
His bosom swell'd with ecstasy;
The warlock's threat'ning cross'd his brain,
But his heart still promis'd victory:
Each chieftain's iron hand he grasp'd,
But the lov'd Menteith to his breast he clasp'd;
For in childhood's hour of bliss serene,
While yet life smiled, a vernal scene,

Shar'd had their early pastimes been,
And with mutual hopes in infancy
They had sent the aspiring kite on high,
And chac'd with emulous speed the bright-wing'd butterfly.

XXXVI.

The rapid words of greeting kind
Now claim'd but short delay,
For swift as the rush of the mountain wind
Wallace resumed his way;
He heard the horn at distance wound,
And his soul caught fire at the well-known sound;
And when he reach'd the assembled host,
His plumed cap on high he toss'd,
And bade them be of sprightly cheer,
And told of the aid that hover'd near.

XXXVII.

Here pause my lay—for the mists of time
Cover the armed throng!
In vain I seek the forms sublime,
With feeble voice I pour the rhyme,

And weave the imperfect song!
The filmy shades of ancient days
Melt as we too intensely gaze!
Turn then aside my aching eyes,
'Till again from their misty clouds shall rise
The dim and dark-robed years of Scotland's miseries!

END OF CANTO THE SECOND.

WALLACE.

CANTO THE THIRD.

I.

Wist ye not, king, that heaven saw
When David and Llewellyn died?
And did no secret thought of awe
Whisper to that heart of pride?
Cambria! beside thy gleaming lakes,
'Mid thy green vales and mountains hoar,
What sullen voice thy echoes wakes?
'Tis but the lone sound of the cataract's roar—
For they, the men of song! lie hush'd on Arvon's shore!
Even they have felt the hand of fate.

And Cambria's groves are desolate!
They are crush'd, and heaven's approving ear
No more the sacred lay shall hear!
And shall it not avenge the silence drear?

II.

But veil not, king, thy lofty head!
Pause not till all thy work is done!
Shrink not, while man has blood to shed!
Hark! pride and hatred urge thee on;—
Another crown must still be won!
Oh! for thy sceptre and thy ball—
Oh! for thy mighty power—
I would not share thy death-bed hour,
That hour which comes to all!
I would not look into my soul,
And see the spots which darken thine;
Those murder stains, so black and foul,
To call thy kingdoms mine!
I would not own thy guilty breast,
When sent by heaven's just decree,

The grim, inexorable guest,
Stands by thy couch to summon thee!

III.

Peace, froward strains! The guilty head
Leave we to brave the rage of heaven!
Ah! who but waits his doom with dread,
And trembling, hopes to be forgiven!
When we stand on the dark grave's fearful brink,
When we touch the verge of the world below,
When our lip shall be wet with the chill, cold drink,
The latest drop in our cup of woe,
When the warrior quits his useless brand,
And the sceptre slips from the nerveless hand,
When the ardent heart, its tremblings o'er,
Shall waver, and hope, and fear no more,
When love's warm smile, hate's fiery eye,
Must, quench'd in the dust of the church-yard lie—
If thou knowest a breast like the virgin snow,
Pure and unthaw'd on Dunmaït's brow;
Oh! ask, when it touches this awful goal,
What are the thoughts of the passing soul?

The tear that swims in the filmy eye,
The chill, faint breath of the final sigh,
These are the passing soul's reply!
The farewel of the lingering mind,
Which hangs on this pleasant world, for ever left behind!

IV.

Methinks I told you even now
The sun had risen on Scotland's train;
But the Muse, 'mid fancy's ebb and flow,
Fain would lead ye back again,
To where the moonlight shade did fall,
Eastward of old Linlithgow's wall;
Where on the heath a monarch lay,
Lay lowly, 'mid his proud array;
The king was sick, infirm, and old,
Yet to guard the anointed head
From baleful dews or night-blasts cold,
No tent its curtain spread,
For the regal soldier loved to share
The rugged heather bed, and dank unwholesome air.

V.

He shrank not as the chill night-wind
Came bleak from the northern sea;
'Twas a thought of pride to his warlike mind,
That of all his train, the meanest hind
As softly lodged as he:
And he smiled, as the rude and reckless blast
Through his grey hairs uncourtly past.
There many a gently nurtur'd heir
Trembled in Scotland's hostile air,
And fain would have spread his couch of down,
But for dread of the king's indignant frown;
And many a deep, yet secret sigh,
Flitted back to their peaceful native sky,
To the perfum'd air of the taper'd hall,
To the stately shew of the midnight ball,
To the mellow voice of minstrelsy,
To the unalarm'd repose of the velvet canopy!

VI.

But these were boys, who ne'er met lance
Sharper than lady's wounding glance:

Who ne'er with mailed champion strove,
Whose rudest oaths were vows of love;
Yet let them meet the raging foe,
Anon their English hearts shall glow!
Let them but feel the kindling flame,
Once roused, they ne'er forsake the game;
And many a silken textured wight,
Who timorous seeks the untried fight,
Quits his first field in conscious pride,
His maiden sword in crimson dyed!
The bruising mail, the smarting scar,
The ungentle livery of war,
Soon wean the English youth from toys,
To glory's sports of death, and honour's perilous joys!

VII.

The brave earl Guy—a fearful name,
Tho' yet but young in life,
Was practis'd in the field of fame,
And old in martial strife:
Bigod and Hereford were there,
And gallant Ralph de Monthermer;

The hardy Welchman, bold Montalt,
Still fierce and rapid in assault;
Yet methinks 'twere nobler had he lain
Stiffening on his native plain,
Than graced with banner broad the dark oppressor's train!

VIII.

Two Lancasters, both men of might,
Attend their monarch to the fight;
William de Ross, a loyal lord,
Aids Edward with his northern sword,
And recks not, tho' its fatal steel
His once-lov'd kinsman's bosom feel;
For hatred most corrodes the breast
Where most affection throve,
And its lurid blossoms flourish best
When grafted upon love!
Behold! well clad in war's attire,
With looks that speak a soul on fire,
Whose lips breathe wrath, whose eyes disdain
The loftiest of the armed train!

IX.

Was he not sworn, yon man of might,
With pride elate, with fury blind,
To preach the day-beam's heavenly light,
And promise comfort to mankind?
He swore!—God heard the sacred word
Which sealed to holy peace his life!
Yet see! he waves the ruffian's sword,
And hark! he lifts the dæmon cry of strife!

X.

Round his peace-consecrated head
Are six and twenty standards spread,
And vassal youths, of nobles born,
Crouch beneath Durham's eye of scorn!
His bulky form, with twisted mail,
Is covered cap-a-pee,
And the gambeson,* of much avail,
When strokes of boisterous dint assail,

* A quilted coat, worn for the purpose of deadening blows.

Descends below his knee;
Between it and his iron vest,
A plastron* guards his ample chest;
The holy mitre cast aside,
Yields to the helmet's warlike pride;
And those same hands, ordain'd to share
To men the soul's mysterious food,
Stain'd with the impious work of war,
Are cased in steel and dyed in blood;
When stately barons, stretch'd along,
Lay mingled with their vassal throng;
When even Edward's mighty head,
Unshelter'd, press'd the dewy bed,
The haughty Durham's curling brow,
Mark'd with a sneer the prostrate crowd,
And as he felt the night-wind blow,
Shivering he sought his pallion proud:
Flow'd for his use the blood-red wine,
Bright torches round him lustre shed,

* An invisible breast-plate.

And wrapt in linen soft and fine,
He sank, his beads untold, upon a velvet bed!

XI.

Sir Ralph, his rival in the fight,
Gave the proud priest a stern good night;
The hardy knight was bred and born
To battle's dangerous trade;
He loved the fight, and saw with scorn
The man of God, with temples shorn,
Usurp the helmet's shade:
With fury in his heart, he sees
The bishop's tent, encircled wide,
With banners floating on the breeze,
And all the pomp of princely pride;
Guidons and pennons fann'd the air,
As if a monarch slumber'd there;
And thro' night's silence you might hear
The distant watch-word pass'd around,
For no rash step might venture near
That consecrated ground!
As Basset on the damp earth lay,

Wrath's pungent stings drove sleep away,
Nay, I fear that in his secret breast
He mutter'd a curse on the warlike priest:—
For this, Launde's venerable train,
With many a mass shall plead to heaven;
Methinks they shall not sue in vain,
But the rough soldier's just disdain
Already is forgiven!

XII.

Clinton, the king's beloved esquire,
Watch'd by his sovereign's side,
Of zeal and truth that never tire,
Of loyal valour's purest fire,
This youth was prov'd and tried!
And tho' the fearless Edward chose,
Unwatch'd, unguarded, to repose,
When each tired soldier soundly slept,
Unseen, unheard, young Clinton crept
To where the king forgot his crown
And cares, amid the heather brown;
And bending, round the royal head

His quilted gambeson he spread;
Then pensive, leaning on his spear,
And shivering in the night-blast drear,
He waited the slowly coming day,
And as he watch'd the pale moon's ray,
He mus'd on the maiden bright who slumber'd far away!

XIII.

Among the chiefs who press'd the heath,
Lay Pembroke's earl, proud Adomar!
None better lov'd the sport of death,
With hotter speed none rush'd to war!
Beneath his massy iron mace
What hapless victim e'er found grace?
Whose is that giant form, whose length
And ponderous limbs speak power and strength,
From whose bent brow sleep's gentle sway
Charms not the rugged frown away,
Whose rest some galling vision breaks,
Whose sudden hand his faulchion seeks?
Nor marvel that an inward war
Should vex that warrior's breast,

The false Cospatric of Dunbar!
How can he hope for rest?
When shall his torturing conscience cease
To gnaw his soul, and banish peace!
He dreams on many a pleasant strath
And many a shadowy glen,
Dear haunts of childhood's harmless path:
Now, blackening in the smoke of wrath,
And foul with the blood of his countrymen!
He dreams that on the roll of fame
Cospatric's name shall stand,
Aye, branded with the mark of shame,
A rebel to his native land!
Then sleep, Dunbar! and ne'er fall rest
Softer on traitor's hollow breast!

XIV.

Lord Berkeley was a gallant knight
As e'er couch'd lance on thigh;
He was fierce and fell in the field of fight,
But in the eye of each lady bright,
The flower of courtesy!

His youth was past—yet still the foe
Read death in the frown of lord Berkeley's brow;
His youth was past—alas! the while!
Yet many a pretty female wile,
Contended for lord Berkeley's smile!
Ambition was now a dying flame,
And his world-worn breast was cloy'd with fame;
So many a smile his youth had bless'd,
That love was cold in lord Berkeley's breast!
Then why did he seek the piercing air
Of Scotia's mountains, bleak and bare?
Why did he quit blue Severn's side,
Where waves the meadow's golden pride,
On whose banks the roguish zephyr pours
From apple-groves white-blossom'd showers;
Where on the summer breezes sail
The soft trill of the nightingale;
Or echoing wide o'er the twilight plain,
The milk-maid's simple evening strain,
Or the cow-boy's plaintive voice, as he calls his lowing train.

XV.

When lord Berkeley quitted his ancient tower,
Alone he went not forth;
But bare from Severn's pleasant bower
Its greenest plant, its gayest flower,
From the warm breath of the summer hour
To the buffetting blasts of the north!
Sir Maurice had broken many a spear,
And waken'd many a sigh,
But he long'd to begin the high career,
Where danger and death make the triumph dear
Of blood-wash'd victory!
What reck'd he, tho' in many a joust
His baffled rival bit the dust?
He scorn'd the prize he bore away,
As the guerdon of inglorious play,
And long'd for danger's hotter day;
Yet to mark the soft brown of his hazel eye,
Or his false tongue's warbled flattery,
You might deem the youth a gallant meet
To sigh out his life at a lady's feet:
But the soft swain vanish'd, when anon

Lord Berkeley summon'd his eager son,
To buckle his burnish'd cuirass on—
Then his hazel eye pour'd a stream of fire,
And his cheek blush'd bright with the flush of ire;
Nor 'mid Edward's thousands rode a knight
More mild in the hour of peace, nor direr in the fight!

XVI.

'Mid the yellow broom lord Berkeley lay—
But where was Sir Maurice gone?
When low in the heavens the sun's last ray
Blush'd its farewel to expiring day,
He had wander'd forth alone:
His fleetest steed the knight bestrode,
Yet gently thro' the camp he rode;
He had doff'd his cumbrous glittering gear,
For the pliant weed of the hobiler;*
Nor shone his plated brigandine,
With quaint device, or blazon fine;
A streaming pennon deck'd his lance,
As it sparkled in the sun's last glance;

* The dress of a light-armed soldier.

As the western barrier-rail he pass'd,
He answer'd the watchman's call in haste;
Yet in the wide camp knew there none
Whither Sir Maurice alone was gone:
Lord Berkeley guess'd that the foe was near,
And his brave heart throbb'd with a father's fear;
Albeit, nor doubt, nor fear confess'd,
He hid them close in his anxious breast;
But with angry brow and tongue severe,
He call'd aloud, that his train might hear,
And wish'd, with bitter speech and stern,
He might dearly buy his truant ride,
And by some rude adventure, earn
A lesson to his restless pride.

XVII.

Spirit of Song! oh! do not fly!
Let not thy mystic light expire!
Oh, pour thy visions on mine eye!
Oh, set my soul on fire!
Oh! bid it flow, the living strain,
The holy incense memory pays

Yon sacred, venerable train
Of time-enshrouded days!
They are gone—the mighty chiefs of yore,
Gone to their house of rest!
And our feeble footsteps wander o'er
Many a hero's mouldering breast,
While, with curious eyes, our pigmy race
Their huge gigantic relics trace;
On the massy helm with awe we gaze,
The ponderous spear we lift in vain—
Oh! great were the men of ancient days
Ere the world was in its wane!
The cold grey stone is on their dust,
And the broad bright brand is devour'd with rust;
They have yielded the battle and the chace
To a short-liv'd, weak, degenerate race!
But the Muse lives still, and tho' grain from grain,
The winged winds their dust has blown,
Tho' heedless feet or driving rain
Each record has worn from the mossy stone;
Yet the Muse still lives—she lives to tell
How bold their deeds—their hearts how brave,

To lift the fame-bestowing spell,
Which bids their names arise, and quit the o'erwhelming grave!

XVIII.

Linlithgow's muir, thy heather bell
Is crush'd by the warrior's ruthless stride,
And many a broom-flower shrank and fell
Beneath the sleeper's armed side!
Oh! fresh as the golden-crested broom,
Sweet as the rose's summer bloom,
Many a fair plant from Scotland's bower,
Shall rue to-morrow's stormy hour,
As they drop in their wintry tomb.
As pale they hang the wither'd head,
With sever'd stem and fragrance fled,
And lie all crush'd on the field of death,
Like the broom-flower on Linlithgow's heath!

XIX.

Where have we been? Why did we stray,
While many a name is yet untold,
Meet to adorn the poet's lay,

When he sings of the chiefs of old?
Oh! 'tis a task the Muse denies,
To fix so long her roving eyes,
To linger with her wings of flame,
And tedious creep from name to name!
Follow us to the field of fame!
The flashing sword, the whirling spear,
The dreadful shock of the knight's career,
'Tis these must tear from the grasp of death
The never-dying name—the never-fading wreath!

XX.

Lord Clifford—tho' we love thee well,
We pause not on thy name!
Sleep now—amid the battle's yell,
Many a noble deed shall tell,
Lord Clifford strikes for fame!
What, shall we pass earl Marshal by—
That moody-fronted lord!
Sleep wraps in clouds his wrathful eye,
Keen as his two-edged sword!
Let others fight, that men may say

They bore the prize of fame away;
Nor breath of praise, nor song of bard,
Shall yield, stern Bigod, thy reward!
E'en now he dreams his greedy hands
Hold in their grasp the plunder'd lands,
And hears the weeping shepherds hail
Him lord of fertile Tiviotdale!

XXI.

Why, thou fair orb, dost thou smile so bright
As thou rollest on thy way!
Can'st thou not hide thy silver light,
That the heavens, all dark with the clouds of night,
Might frown on yon fierce array!
But why should'st thou hide thy shining brow,
Thou who walk'st thro' the midnight sky!
Tho' the dæmon who gives the word for woe,
Bids the tear descend, and the life-blood flow,
Thy place shall be still on high!
Thou lookest on man—thou seest him bless'd
In the light of his little day—
Thou lookest anon—he is gone to rest!

The cold worm creeps in his lordly breast,
He sleeps in the grave's decay!
Thou sawest his rise—thou shalt see him fall,
Thou shalt stay till the tomb has cover'd all,
'Till death has crush'd them, one by one,
Each frail, yet proud ephemeron!
To-morrow thy cold and tranquil eye
Shall gaze again from the midnight sky;
With unquench'd light, with ray serene,
Thou shalt glance on the field where death has been;
Thou shalt gild his features, pale and wan,
Thou shalt gaze on the form of murder'd man,
On his broken armour scatter'd round,
On the sever'd limb, and the yawning wound—
But thou, amidst the wrecks of time,
Unfrowning passest on, and keep'st thy path sublime!

XXII.

Fortha, how gently rolls thy stream
Beneath the moonlight's yellow gleam;
Each billow calm, each gale at rest,
How softly heaves thy glittering breast!

Ah! who would think, conceal'd beneath,
Lie horror, danger, shipwreck, death!
The pale light rests on yon riven tower,
Once stern and strong in the pride of power,
And awful still in its evening hour:
Where is the hooting tenant gone,
Who 'mid the rank grass, waving high,
Pour'd, as the night's mild empress shone,
His uncouth minstrelsy?
He heard the war-horse neighing loud,
He heard the steps of the clanging crowd,
He heard, and wav'd his pinion grey,
And flitted sullenly away!
Old Dunipace! time's misty shroud,
Hangs dark on each swelling mound;
History would fain disperse the cloud,
And pierce thy veil profound:
Perchance within each hollow breast,
What once were kings and heroes, rest!
Perchance, yon breathing sleepers lie
On dust which once was living man,

And strutted its hour beneath the sky,
'Till it yielded its little span!

XXIII.

In yonder camp 'tis all so still
That you might hear a foot-fall pass—
The deep, low echo from the hill,
The tinkling fall of the humble rill,
The weak-voic'd nations of the grass;
Save, when by fits the breeze blew cold,
And whistled in the standard fold;
Save the watchman's call, as he strides alone,
Or the clang of his iron sabaton;
Save, when the angry blood-hound bay'd,
Or the fiery steed impatient neigh'd:
Even they who thought to watch thro' night,
Were lull'd by the silent scene;
No longer they gaz'd on the heavens bright,
A shade fell mild o'er their cheated sight,
And they sank on the dewy green;
E'en Clinton, who unbidden took

His stand by his monarch dear,
Beguil'd, the much-lov'd post forsook,
And nodded on his spear.

XXIV.

Ho! havoc! havoc! treason! death!
The king!—the king is slain!
Tumult and uproar shake the heath,
Each glittering weapon quits its sheath,
And flashes o'er the plain!
Young Clinton, starting at the shout,
Rolls his bewilder'd eyes;
Hasty they glance 'twixt fear and doubt,
To the spot where his master lies—
Some secret hand, some traitor's wound,
Has left him struggling on the ground!
Again the hoarse yell rends the sky,
Havoc, and death, and treachery!

XXV.

Bigod, who saw young Clinton stand,
With his glittering weapon in his hand,

Mistook the mute and dread surprise
Which glared in his wildly rolling eyes,
And "Lo! where the villain stands!" he cries,
Then seizes the youth by his waving crest,
And with two-edged sword assaults his breast!
The king no longer felt his wound,
But started dauntless from the ground,
"Hold, on thy life, thou moody lord!
For by the God who gave me breath,
Edward's own hand, the royal sword
Shall avenge young Clinton's death!
Thanks, loyal knights, and may that power
Which led me to this happy hour,
This hour, ordain'd by heaven to prove,
And bless me with my soldier's love;
Teach it to smile upon my heart
'Till conquest, kingdom, life depart."

XXVI.

Earl Marshal, slowly from his prey
Withdrew his grasp severe,
And muttering low, he strode away,

" Remember on another day,
Officious zeal to fear ;"
For he saw the coat of Clinton spread,
To guard the monarch's sacred head,
And much he abhorr'd in the loyal youth,
The simple test of love and truth ;
He never knew, nor sought to know,
Of faith sincere, the grateful glow ;
But read in affection's beaming eye
The well-dissembled wile of smooth hypocrisy !

XXVII.

The barons still with eager eyes
Seek the audacious foe,
And each, with thundering menace cries,
" What traitor dealt the blow ?"
Edward, tho' on his royal brow
The dew of pain is starting slow,
Smiling, directs his glittering spear,
To where his steed stood plunging near,
And shew'd his polish'd cuirass, broke
By the arm'd courser's savage stroke :

With vulgar rage, and barbarous zeal,
They flew to avenge the deed,
And in many a hand the high-rais'd steel
Threaten'd the unconscious steed.
The king reprov'd the impetuous lords,
And bade them sheathe their eager swords,
And ask'd, with faint and faltering speech,
For the healing hand of the skilful Leech.
They laid him softly on the ground,
And with gentle caution sought the wound;
And soon they saw, with hearts forlorn,
Their monarch's side all bruised and torn;
The broken rib, the starting bone,
From other lips had forc'd the groan;
But Edward's soul with regal pride
The body's weak controul defied.

XXVIII.

Skill'd in the healer's blessed art,
The cunning Leech perform'd his part;
Bath'd in soft balm the burning wound,
And tightly swath'd the body round;

Then gently in the monarch's ear
He pours the prudent hint of fear;
He speaks of sleep, and rest, and care,
Bids him of fight and toil beware;
Bids him the bruising mail lay by,
For peace's silken drapery,
Lest fever, with its fangs of flame,
Seize on the unresisting frame;
And bade him think, ere yet too late,
His life involv'd a nation's fate.
With lowly tone and soothing speech,
Thus mildly sued the cunning Leech;
Gave sundry precepts, grave and wise,
Meet to be stored, lest need arise;
Much, by the giddy Muse forgot,
And much, which Edward heeded not!

XXIX.

The king starts from the healer's hand!
Some joyous outcry sweeps the sky!
And in the west the distant band
Send shouts like shouts of victory!

No ear can doubt 'tis hope and joy
That raise the wild, unwonted cry!
" Make way, make way!" the ebbing throng,
Soon leave a passage wide and long.
" Make way, make way!—'tis I who bring
News fit to heal a wounded king;
'Tis I, who bring the promise high,
Of conquest, fame, and victory!"

XXX.

Disguis'd by dust, and toil, and heat,
Sir Maurice quits his staggering steed,
And falling at his monarch's feet,
Still panting with his breathless speed,
Scarce would his gasping haste allow
His tongue the welcome truth to show:
" I have seen him, sire! that patriot knight,
The gallant leader of the foe!
Oh! how each nerve was up for fight!
Oh! how my heart began to glow!
Oh! how it panted, hand to hand,

Against that sinewy chief to stand,
And flash before his eyes my yet unspotted brand!

XXXI.

Edward, who lov'd the coming fight,
Heard the young soldier with delight,
" Rise! Berkeley, rise! and quickly say,
How near the foe—what force they boast?
Say, does yon ruddy sparkling ray,
Which brightens the skies with its splendors gay,
Bring doomsday to yon rebel host?"

XXXII.

" My liege, as evening thicken'd round,
I quitted our guarded barrier ground;"
He drop'd his eye, for the monarch frown'd;
" Pardon, dread liege! I own 'twas wrong;
But something still within my breast
Was goading with its ceaseless tongue,
And would not let me rest;
It told me that a trusty scout
Might find yon hardy rebels out;

I could not bear the mocking hours
Should see us idly loitering here,
While sloth and famine waste our powers,
And rust is blunting every spear!
Believe me, sire, the daring deed,
The sudden stroke, the rash, hot speed,
These, these alone, in war succeed!"

XXXIII.

Sir Maurice paus'd, and Edward smil'd,
To see youth's spirit boiling o'er,
And his aged heart, by the tale beguil'd,
Went back to the fights of yore,
And thought on the days, when in fields of blood,
'Gainst the rebel Montfort, fierce he stood;
Remembering his own impetuous joy,
He smil'd as he view'd the warlike boy!
"Now, might I well, with tongue austere,
Adjudge thee to a doom severe,
And teach that restless heart controul,
And bind in iron bands thy soul;
But oh! I would, the powers divine

Form'd every subject's heart like thine,
Timid, like thine, to own a master's frown,
Or bold, like thine, to assert the glory of his throne!"

XXXIV.

Young Berkeley's downy cheek was dyed
With the rich tint of generous pride;
On his eye-lash hung a chrystal clear,
In semblance like a starting tear;
But it could not be, for tears, they say,
Should never soil a warrior's face;
And yet, methinks that chrystal's ray
Lent manly beauty grace!

XXXV.

"Please you, my liege, to hear the tale—
With fruitless haste my courser sped,
'Till the bright sun, in the western vale,
Had hidden his visage, broad and red;
I cast around my anxious eye,
But never a foeman could descry;
Each shepherd's song, each throstle's note,

I took for the trumpet's brazen throat;
And the foliage, trembling in the breeze,
I guess'd were the rebels' standard-trees:
At length all baffled, vex'd, and spent,
Back to the camp my way I bent;
And thought I felt the galling jeers,
The wounding scoffs and poison'd sneers,
Which every foil'd adventurer bears.

XXXVI.

Loth to return my comrade's jest,
I gave my foaming courser rest;
I led him to a babbling rill,
Which gush'd from the foot of a rocky hill:
The fair moon now was risen high,
The vault of heaven was glittering bright,
Yet nevertheless, right pensively
I gaz'd on the lovely night,
And said to my steed, in a sullen tone,
'Come, come, 'tis time we should be gone!'
Scarce had I spoke, when near I spied,
Come tottering down the hill's rude side,

An aged, palsy-stricken crone,
Helpless, unaided, and alone.

XXXVII.

The good St. Mary gave me grace
To pity the feeble stranger's case,
And I left my thirsty steed to drink
His fill at the fountain's fringed brink.
'Good mother,' said I, as the way I led,
With helping hand down the rugged steep—
'Hast thou no cot, no home, no bed,
Thus, 'mid the chill night-dews to creep,
While age, and pain, and care should sleep?'

XXXVIII.

With frequent cough and broken tone
Thus spoke at length the trembling crone:
'Yes, 'mid these ruin'd, wasted plains,
My lonely hovel yet remains:
When all, the spoiler's vengeance shar'd,
Its humble misery was spar'd;
But methinks I shall not long remain,

A hermit on the desart plain,
For ebbing life is failing fast,
And woe and waste shall cease at last:
At the grey hour of eventide,
I totter'd up the hill's rough side,
But ere its lofty brow I won,
Quench'd in the wave was the golden sun;
When I look'd towards pleasant Torwoodlee,
A mist was thick on every tree,
And my dim eye wept, as it strove in vain
To pierce the shroud which had wrapt the plain—
I staid 'till the moon was above my head,
And the glittering earth at my feet was spread,
And fancied I saw in the silver gleam
The armour flash, and the banners stream—
Oh! how I wept, and groan'd, and pray'd,
That heaven might grant our heroes aid!
And drop'd to St. Mary every bead,
That this last dread effort may succeed!
My son, amidst yon noble band,
With Wallace, lifts his daring hand!
I know not if my sight were true,

Or if silly age beguil'd my view;
But methought I saw yon blessed throng,
The avengers of their country's wrong:
Young stranger, go, thine eyes are good,
Direct them towards yon western wood—
Good youth, thou wilt not long be gone,
I will rest my limbs on this mossy stone.'

XXXIX.

By heav'n! I paus'd not to reply,
I rush'd like the wind to the mountain's height,
And east and west, and low and high,
I rolled my eager sight!
And ere I left that mountain's brow,
I saw St. Andrew's banner flow!
The aged dame to her cot I led,
And bade her depart in haste to bed.
Then laden with blessings, away I hied
To find my steed by the fountain's side.
Short tale to tell—the wayward beast
Was blythe to feel himself releas'd;
Car'd nor for soothing word, nor threat,

But bounded away as an arrow fleet;
In vain I fretted, chaf'd, and toil'd,
The wanton beast my efforts foil'd;
Much time, and breath, and labour lost,
At length my courser's back I cross'd.

XL.

As northward I my journey held,
To gain the Carron's winding strand,
A joyful pageant I beheld,
Old Scotland's sons, a crested band,
Were spread o'er Stirling's marshy land!
Securely placed, I watch'd the host,
While Carron's dangerous stream they cross'd,
And hovering near, still undescried,
Each motion of the march I spied.
With dust all blinded and besprent,
Close to their side my steps I bent;
Nor did I leave them, 'till at last,
Near Falkirk's walls the halt was pass'd:
Some men of God, 'mid the armed crowd,
Beg'd heaven's smile, with sad appeal;

Then helmets bright, and plumage proud,
To the green earth imploring bow'd,
And stretch'd in suppliant act a thousand hands of steel!"

XLI.

On Edward's lips play'd a gloomy smile,
For his brow was furrow'd by frowns the while;
The Leech stood staring all aloof,
For he call'd for his cuirass, of battle proof!
"Oh! bring me my steed, my gallant steed!
Hang a biting axe at his saddle bow!
Give the brave beast an ample feed,
That his courage be up, and keen his speed,
To dart like an eagle on the foe!

XLII.

Now he that is brave, and he that is fleet,
He that with danger loves to sport,
To whom scars are jests, and toil is sweet,
Let him speak, for the time is short!
He shall ride on errand as wild and dire,
As to tread on the wrecks of a town on fire;

He shall go, where perchance his brief reward
Shall be scorn and death (a guerdon hard!)
Say, is there one of our knights who fears
To stand for his king amid Scottish spears,
To seek the gaunt lion in his den?
Not one, for our knights are Englishmen!
Now who will carry a letter of guile
To Comyn the red, that crafty lord?
And who, for the meed of his monarch's smile,
Will brave the sharp edge of our foeman's sword?"

XLIII.

Now many a voice was lifted high,
But Sir Maurice was first upon his knee,
And his, 'mid the loud, was the loudest cry,
" I will carry the king's commands or die!
'Tis a boon he owes to me!"
Edward was glad—his inmost soul
Own'd love, and gratitude, and joy!
As he felt the warm tide of transport roll—
For once, he hail'd its soft controul,
While to his regal heart he press'd the zealous boy!

XLIV.

Scarce was the wish'd assent bestow'd,
When striding slowly from the crowd,
Came grim Dunbar—his brow austere,
Was darken'd still by an envious sneer;
But bending low by the monarch's side,
His frowning front he sought to hide:
" I grieve, my liege, to think what smart,
What venom galls each veteran heart,
What shame those hoary heads must feel,
So long for thee begirt in steel;
Long prov'd in faith, in arms long tried,
To see yon stripling's licens'd pride!
Licens'd by thee, by thee caress'd,
Bold tenant of the royal breast!
But duty bids, tho' much I scorn
To share yon boy's allotted task;
Yet even disdains for duty borne
May well a soldier's brow adorn,
And these disdains I ask!
I tell thee, Edward, one light word
Breath'd by Dunbar in Comyn's ear,

Shall sooner move that wavering lord,
Than aught yon stripling knight shall bear,
Presage it gain or loss, or fair reward, or fear!

XLV.

Thro' each dark nook of Comyn's breast
My wary eye is wont to glide;
There envy's snaky volumes rest,
Ambition trembling hides his crest,
And there in humble seeming dress'd,
Lurks slyly hid the tyrant, Pride;
But chief, amid that den of vice,
Stands pale and wrinkled avarice!
I know him well! for glittering pelf
Each tie, or human or divine,
His friend, his country—nay, himself,
Must fall at Mammon's shrine!
Dread sovereign, bid Cospatric go!
Once more he bends the stubborn knee;
And shall he vainly stoop thus low,
Who country, kin, and friends forsook to follow thee!"

XLVI.

Edward was mov'd, tho' in his face
August the conscious master shone,
Yet fled the frown, and beaming grace
Proclaim'd the suit was won.
Cospatric and the youthful knight,
Now gaily fared forth
In yeoman weed, no curious sight,
Was dazzled by its flashing bright,
And thus they pricked north:
Yet tho' so blythe on their way they went,
On treacherous errand they were bent,
Oh! purchase vile! Oh! traffic foul!
To buy for gold a soldier's soul!

XLVII.

Now shall I sing, how princely shew'd
Each English baron's glittering gear,
How fair each blazon'd surcoat flow'd,
How bright the burnish'd helmet glow'd,
How sparkled every spear?
Or shall I tell, how richly dight,

The steeds which bore them to the fight,
What Chanfrons blaz'd in gems and gold,
Or proudly wav'd their plumage bold?
Or shall I bid before your eye,
Escutcheon'd streamers flout the sky?
No, the impetuous Muse would fain
Rush onward to the battle plain,
And who shall vainly dare her ardent course restrain!

XLVIII.

Ye pompous trappings, vain and fine,
Which glance as the laughing sun-beams shine,
Frail flatterers of a moment's pride!
As short-liv'd as the forms ye cover!
In dust, and blood, and horror dyed:
Soon shall your transient boast be over,
On Falkirk's hostile plain there stands
Intrepid souls, and powerful hands;
But gem of price, or glittering stone,
Or broider'd vestment, is there none;
Yet patriot honour warms their hearts,
And strong-arm'd justice wings their darts;

And they have knelt on their native sod,
And given their cause to the hand of God;
And they think, as they rise from the righteous prayer,
The sword of heaven's Lord, with them to fight shall fare.

XLIX.

Oh! thou Omnipotent! whose ways
Man's daring optics trace in vain!
Who dare, with doubting heart arraign,
Tho' storms and clouds obscure the wisdom of thy reign!
Tho', thro' the nether world, elate
The ruffian stalks, upheld by fate;
Tho' murderous treason, scoffing tread
On the crown'd martyr's sacred head;
Tho' myriads bleed, tho' kingdoms fall
Tho' wrath in whirlwinds hurl the ball,
Eternal wisdom governs all!

L.

But see! the armed crowds advance,
They have levell'd the marking banderole!
Quick o'er the sunny plain they glance,

And wide the flashing numbers roll!
Reader, farewel—and if thou dare
By good St. George we'll meet again,
Where rage and valour rush to war,
And bleeding heroes tinge the plain!
For ere another day be done,
A kingdom shall be lost and won!

END OF CANTO THE THIRD.

WALLACE.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

I.

YES, it is come! That pause of dread,
Whose silent interval precedes
Men's faltering footsteps, as they tread
Towards sanguinary deeds!
There is an hour, whose pressure cold
Comes even to the hero's breast!
Each warrior's heart of human mould
Howe'er intrepid, fierce and bold,
Has still that hour confest.
It is not when the battle-storm

Hurtles along the affrighted skies,
It is not when death's hideous form,
His threatening voice and piercing cries,
Shriek in our ears and scares our eyes;
It is not when the slogan shout
Has sent the death-word 'mid the rout,
Nor 'mid the hail of the arrowy shower,
Nor when we see the life-blood pour;
It comes not then—that ghastly hour!
'Tis in the breathless pause before,
While yet unwash'd with human gore
Our thoughts 'mid dreams of terror roam,
And sadly muse on things to come!
Then shuddering nature half recoils,
And half forbids the inhuman toils!
But 'tis too late!—the die is cast!
The furies bid to the repast!
Oh! from the cradle to the tomb,
Comes there no hour so fraught with gloom,
As that ere nations meet, to seal each other's doom.

II.

They come! and for the mortal fray
Wallace has clos'd his firm array;
As still as death, in wreathing band,
The invulnerable squadrons stand,
A treble hedge of serried spears
Defies the armed coursers' shock,
And the bold front a visage bears,
As stern as Ailsa's rock!
A sloping hill is their battle-ground,
Behind, rough Carron rolls his flood,
Still pure and clear from native blood;
A deep morass, with gulphs profound,
Whose surface hides the path unsound,
Protects their front—its treacherous green
Tempts to the precipice unseen;
A pious fraud!—it lures the foe,
But guards its country from the blow!

III.

The heavy trampling steeds advance!
Near, and more near the standards wave,

And brighter gleams the pennon'd lance,
As it quivers in the morning glance,
Borne in the hand of the brave!
They come like the swell of a mighty stream,
All glistening beneath the summer beam;
And the murmur deep of their ponderous course
Sounds like the roar of the torrent hoarse:
But lo! they halt!—for face to face,
In sullen pause the armies stand!
And see, with grim desire they trace
The little interval of space,
And long to combat hand to hand!

IV.

But yet, nor angry voice we hear,
Nor waves the fatal sword on high,
Nor barbed dart, nor whistling spear,
On errand of death has pass'd the sky!
Now Edward bids his heralds ride—
"Go stir earl Marshall to the fight!
Bid him dash on to the western side,
And break the rebel's right!

To Basset and brave Durham, thou—
Their king a loving greeting sends;—
Ask, if they see what a scowling brow
Each broody Scotsman bends!
And tell them Edward holds it good
They wake the foe from his sullen mood!
Bid them wheel left, and scatter wide
Yon threatening hedge of spears, and trample on its pride!"

V.

Already thro' the silent line
The dreadful battle-word is given;
Swords wav'd aloft, like death-stars shine,
And war-cries sweep the azure heaven!
Earl Marshall spurs his milk-white steed,
He falls on the Scot like a bolt of fire,
He turns the moss with skill and speed,
And with menace loud, and gallant deed,
He flings his lance on message dire!
As with strong arm he whirls it round,
And sends it whizzing thro' the air;
"Go! pin some rebel to the ground,

And to his shuddering soul declare,
'Tis Bigod strikes the foremost blow,
Bigod, whose very eye sheds death-fire on the foe."

VI.

The Scottish line, with steady eye,
Beheld the insulting weapon fly!
The Scot, whose blood by fate was given,
First in his country's cause to flow,
With unmov'd limbs, undrooping brow,
Gaz'd calmly on the coming blow
Which sent his soul to heaven!

VII.

Now on earl Marshall's coat of mail,
And thick amid his clustering train,
Rattles the bowman's fatal hail!
And many a horseman bites the plain,
Who ne'er shall manage steed again,
And stung to fury many a horse,
Mad with the smart of the frequent wound,
Dashes, with unresisted force,

His rider to the ground!
Yet Wallace bids his steeled band
All mute and still as the sea-rock stand,
Tho' bold the ocean wave rages against the strand.

VIII.

Now, Stewart! now, thou veteran knight!
St. Andrew bless thy sinewy arm!
Give eagle vigour to thy sight,
Guide in its path thy arrow's flight,
To drink yon baron's life-blood warm!
The arrow flies with erring speed,
It sticks in the breast of the plunging steed!
Bigod is thrown!—See, wild with ire,
His red eye flashes streams of fire,
Rising he waves his two-edged sword,
While slow amid his train retires the baffled lord.

IX.

Loud, as the cornet's clanging sound,
Came there a voice to the baron's ear,
" Does Bigod fly without a wound,

Struck only by the hand of fear?
Return, return, thou recreant knight!
'Tis Wallace dares thee to the fight!
Come, robber, turn thee to the toil,
Nor basely fly without the spoil!"
Foaming with rage, the baron turns,
Fierce as the blood-hound held at bay,
His inmost soul indignant burns,
He stays not to remount, but seeks on foot the fray!

X.

Wallace, who scorn'd the unequal fight,
And trusted in his arm of might,
Leap'd from his steed, with agile vault,
And rudely rush'd to the assault.
" Baron, beware—I come for harm!
Old Scotland's wrongs my bosom warm,
And God to vengeance nerves my arm!"
Wide swept old Scotland's echoing cry,
And Wallace! Wallace! rent the sky,
As hope fill'd every breast, and brighten'd every eye.

XI.

Oh! they were keen and ardent both,
To death's dire business nothing loth!
But short and hot came Bigod's breath,
He spurn'd the ground, and gnash'd his teeth,
And as he whirl'd his weapon round,
Unskilful blows his fury dealt,
It still return'd without a wound,
Or wounding, scarce was felt.
Was lesser wrath in Wallace' breast,
That like the unshaken rock,
His dauntless spirit seem'd to rest
Even in the conflict's shock?
No, deadly, dire, unwavering hate,
Sate in his soul as fix'd as fate;
But his mind was calm, and cool his aim,
He smil'd that a hero's eye should glare with maniac flame!

XII.

He waited till the harrass'd lord,
Vex'd with the combat, long and vain,
Wielding with feeble arm the sword,

With swimming sight and dizzy brain,
Could scarce his armour's weight sustain,
And reel'd in circles on the plain—
"Now, Wallace, now!" was the echoing cry,
As he lifted his battle-axe on high.
Oh! baron! thy helmet's glistering pride
Has sav'd thee from the ponderous blow,
Which else had laid thy honours low!
Behold the harmless weapon glide,
Unstain'd, along its slippery side!
But Wallace, agile, strong, and keen,
Uprais'd his sinewy arm once more,
And scarce a moment's breath between,
Again it falls, and biting sore,
Wide from the yawning wound gushes the purple gore!

XIII.

Wide, wide it pour'd, and from his face
A chilling death-dew seem'd to start;
He thought he had finish'd his mortal race,
For the red torrent flow'd apace,
And icy grew his heart.

Now rushing on, from the English side,
Wave after wave, the numbers roll,
Wallace, erect in martial pride,
With single might the stream defied,
And check'd awhile the o'erwhelming tide,
With arm of steel and dauntless soul;
For mute and still, in wreathed band,
And silence dread, his spearmen stand.

XIV.

Warwick, amid the trampling horse,
Sees proud earl Marshall lowly laid,
And tho' he deems the breathless corse
Has done with life, and recks not aid,
Yet, "Bear him hence," he cried, "the throng
Will do his noble relics wrong!
No tongue shall say, with careless eye,
I saw earl Marshall trampled lie,
Or tarnish Beauchamp's name with foul discourtesy!

XV.

Go, bear him from the heedless strife,
Where man, unpitying, treads on man!
Perchance, unquench'd, the spark of life
May light him yet thro' a longer span.
Quick, bear him hence!" The squire, with heed
Betook him to the gentle deed.
Then brave earl Warwick loos'd the rein,
And mingled in the hottest fray;
And let not envy soil his name,
Nor mark his lofty crest with shame,
For lingering on the battle-day,
Since charity beheld, and hallow'd the delay!

XVI.

On the left, to the clarion's rouzing notes,
How bright, how gay the plumage floats!
There rubies shoot their sanguine fire,
And banners fly in waving gold;
Vests, that might shame the woofs of Tyre,
Glow on full many a bosom bold,
And wrapt it in the purple fold!

The least esquire in Durham's host
In rainbow vesture strutted proud,
For 'twas the bishop's favourite boast
To lord it o'er a glittering crowd.
Now, Durham! St. John defend thy pride,
From stumbling in yon foul morass!
Basset has deftly hit the pass,
And stands with his men on the hostile side.
Now, bishop! call on thy friends in heaven,
For well I ween thy proud array,
By some dark imp of Satan driven,
Are surely going destruction's way!

XVII.

Already they stand on the treacherous brink,
One step, and they hide their heads for ever!
Ah, see! what gallant hundreds sink,
To rise to life and daylight never!
Oh! fatal, rash and erring speed!
Even now, elate in pride they stood,
Now, o'er their heads grows the slimy weed—
Now o'er their perish'd forms rolls ruin's inky flood!

XVIII.

They are gone! and the deceitful green
Leaves not a trace of the work of death!
No furrow hints at the ghastly scene,
Hid in the gulphs beneath!
Yet, or the shuddering eye deceives,
Or still with life the surface heaves,
And a dull echo from the den
Sounds like the gasps of dying men!
But never, never to the ear
Came there a sound so full of fear,
As that short, struggling, mournful cry,
When in wild amaze they rais'd the eye,
And took with frantic glance their farewel of the sky!

XIX.

The haughty prelate, from the brink,
Beheld his hapless vassals sink;
Sudden he curb'd his prancing steed,
And check'd him in his mortal speed!
One moment, and fate's whelming blow
Had torn the mitre from his brow;

One moment, and that haughty eye
Had slumber'd in eternity!
One moment, and in warlike weed,
His breast scarce cool from thirst of blood,
With rash, presumptuous, impious speed,
The consecrated man had stood,
Before that awful judgment throne,
Where sits the Everlasting One!
Where human pride has no appeal,
But every deed that we have done,
To agony or bliss, the immortal soul shall seal!

XX.

Breathless and mute, the bishop's frame
For once feels terror's trembling thrill,
And thro' his bands the martial flame
Yields to its vapour damp and chill;
As they gaze on their comrade's burial-place,
Their straining eye-balls fain would trace
Some vestige of their fall;
'Tis a sad thought to ardent man,

How soon, once stop'd, his fragile span,
Oblivion covers all!

XXI.

Sir Ralph, whom happy fortune led,
Whose gallant train had gaily sped,
Now marvell'd that his brave compeer
Should linger coldly in the rear,
And fear'd he had chosen that time of need
To drop the erst forgotten bead.
He was of mood too stern and sour
To trifle in a serious hour;
And many a pungent word he sent,
To quicken the holy warrior's way;
Bursting at length with discontent,
Back to the loitering train he went,
To chide their dull delay:
"Now, by St. George, yon sneering foe
Stand laughing at our progress slow!
Justly thy tardy pace they mock,
They bid thee doff thy soldier's gear,

And yield to stronger hands the spear,
And quit the battle's boisterous shock,
And wield thy pastoral staff, safe in thy spotless frock."

XXII.

Lord Clifford now the silence broke—
" Peace, Basset! Curb thy angry spleen!
It ill befits thee to provoke,
With taunting, rude, and heartless joke,
The breasts where sorrow's recent stroke
Has left its pressure keen!"
Durham awoke from the panic drear,
But his speech was tremulous and slow:
" Let us wait for Edward with the rear,
That needful aid may still be near,
To strengthen the shock of our career,
And certify the blow!"
" What! wait while Stewart's Selkirk darts
Are quivering in my soldiers' hearts!
No! not a breath!" With furious deed
He prick'd the flank of the bishop's steed,
And shouting aloud, " To mass! to mass!"

The beast leap'd forward to the pass,
And quickly freed the dread morass.

XXIII.

In the bishop's host was not a breast
More blythe than Clifford's at the sight,
Bold Basset's sturdy wrath he bless'd,
As he swept like the wind to the fight!
Oh! he was brave! but thro' his heart
Mild mercy's milky current ran,
And in the warrior's ruthless part
He never sank the man!

XXIV.

Now, now, the battle gathers round!
Now, now, begins the din profound,
And helmets ring against the ground!
See how they urge the rapid course,
As dashing on with a torrent's force;
They fain would break yon rock of spears
Which still its glittering barrier rears!
Still, still it bravely stands the shock!

And many a poitrinal is broke,
And many a lance in shivers flies,
And many a baffled soldier lies
Beneath his courser's heel—ah! never more to rise!

XXV.

Then Clifford's heart was full of gall,
When he saw his gallant comrades fall;
He rais'd to heaven his eye of fire,
And swore to avenge the carnage dire,
For many a knight of mighty name
Already slept on the field of fame,
While others on the fatal plain
Writh'd in the burning grasp of pain,
And call'd the lingerer death, but call'd, alas! in vain!

XXVI.

"Come on, come on, my comrades bold!
Who follows Clifford to the fray?
By heaven this heart, all quench'd and cold,
Shall shed its last drop on this hated mould,
Or yet we'll win the day!"

He seiz'd his banner, and wav'd it high,
Shouting, " Clifford! and death, or victory!"
A thousand tongues, with mingling breath,
Cry, " Clifford, we'll follow thee to death!"
For his valiant deed, and mild controul,
Had fix'd him in the soldier's soul.

XXVII.

Now, Græme! keep fast thy patriot band,
Or whelming ruin is at hand!
Stand firm, as you had taken root,
Draw not a breath, stir not a foot!
And as yon rushing troops advance,
Oh! poise with stronger grasp the lance!
St. Andrew look on your milk-white cross,
And guard your ranks from skaith or loss!
Oh! now, or never, firmly stand!
Or whelming ruin is at hand!

XXVIII.

By heaven they yield!—the severing link
Clangs on the ear as the spearmen shrink!

A deafening outcry to the sky
Sends the joy of the conquering enemy!
Exult not yet!—full many a blow
Shall be struck, ere ye lay old Scotland low!
And tho' yon living bulwark fail'd,
By countless multitudes assail'd,
Ye have but multiplied your foe—
Awhile, in sullen wrath profound,
In silent majesty it frown'd,
Now, bursting on the plain, it scatters death around!

XXIX.

Stewart, of reason half bereft,
Beheld the rout of the shrinking left:
Thither he led his archers true,
And swift and dire his death-bolts flew;
Wherever the war raged, wild and hot,
There you might see that veteran Scot,
For life or limb he heeded not!
Already on the sanguine ground,
Scatter'd in ghastly heaps around,
His faithful followers lay;

And he was mark'd—for the whizzing spear
Sang frequent in his dauntless ear,
Nor turn'd him from his way.

XXX.

Now spur not thy berry-brown steed so fast!
Oh! check the rein, thou gallant Græme!
Thou art blown along by ruin's blast,
And thy name shall swell the dismal waste
Of Scotland's men of fame!
"Ho! Clifford! Turn thee, English lord,
Fiercest of Scotland's foes!
Turn thee, and take from a Scotsman's sword
The debt his country owes!"
Brave Clifford turn'd with eyes of flame,
For he knew the voice of the gallant Græme!
No pause! each shook his lofty crest,
And rush'd to the fight with lance in rest!
Lord Clifford for fame and honour fights,
And loyal valour wings his spear,
But Græme defends his country's rights,
Her liberties and laws, and all that man holds dear!

XXXI.

They fling to the earth each broken lance,
And dazzling bright their falchions glance:
Now rising in the lofty seat,
With deadly strength they aim their blows,
In dreadful shock their coursers meet,
Dire and more dire the conflict grows!
With all the might that hatred gives,
On Clifford's brows a stroke descends,
From the strong helm the crest it rives,
Even thro' the plated mail it drives,
And backward on his steed the astonish'd warrior bends!

XXXII.

Oh! then a second blow, had given
Lord Clifford's soul its pass to heaven!
It might not be—that furious stroke
The offending steel to shivers broke;
Doom'd never to repeat the wound,
Its glittering fragments strew'd the ground.
What rage Græme's ardent bosom stung,

What curses quiver'd on his tongue,
As from his baffled hand the useless hilt he flung!

XXXIII.

He look'd around, but his valorous course
Had borne him far from the patriot band;
He cried, in accents wild and hoarse,
"Now who, for the love of his native land,
Will yield his sword to Græme's right hand?"
Alas! they heard not! for the yell
Of gathering war shriek'd keen and fell;
And little that noble chieftain knew
Amongst his ranks what ruin flew,
Sprinkling the moisten'd turf with murder's crimson dew!

XXXIV.

As round his hopeless glance he turn'd,
With new-born joy his bosom burn'd,
For weltering, near him in the field,
A dying man his eye beheld:
From many a wound, life's welling tide,

In purple wave was ebbing wide;
He could not reach the chieftain's side,
But beckon'd him with effort sore—
Still at his feeble wrist a burnish'd brand he wore!

XXXV.

Then paus'd not Græme, but swiftly ran,
And bent to greet that dying man.
But horror's ice-bolt chill'd his breast!
Starting, he mark'd the well-known crest!
'Twas the brave Duncan of Argyle
Who yielded there, the embattled pile,*
His helmet lay upon the plain,
His eye shone terrible in death,
On his fierce glance rode wild disdain,
And he scorn'd to waste in the groan of pain,
His anguish-laden breath.
"Take it," he cried, "for never more,
Beneath this hand shall foeman sink!
Mac Naughtan's race of fame is o'er,
He touches the grave's dark brink.

* His Crest.

Hence, Græme! bestow thy brief good night,
Nor weakly linger from the fight!
By heaven I would not stay to greet
A brother, dying at my feet,
In the glorious hour of the battle's heat!"
Then his fingers loos'd the broad claymore,
Bath'd to the hilt in Southron gore,
He wav'd his stiffening hand—it fell and rose no more!

XXXVI.

Awakening from his dizzy trance,
Clifford beheld his foe advance,
Wild for revenge, and stung with pain,
Delirium fir'd his reeling brain;
Scarce was the valiant Scot prepar'd,
Against the dire assault to ward;
Just as his right arm, lifted high,
Menaced his raging enemy,
Clifford's bright axe, with thundering stroke,
The pouldron's* massy rivets broke;
Deep thro' his hauberk's mail it drives,
The parting bone asunder rives,

* Shoulder-piece.

And the red torrent gushes wide,
As Græme's once mighty arm hangs powerless by his side!

XXXVII.

" Now yield thee, Scot!" lord Clifford cries,
" Thy good right arm with war has done!
This day, who boasts a richer prize
Than Clifford's sword has won!"
" Cease, haughty lord, thy ill-tim'd boast,
My good right hand shall fight no more!
But has the left its vigour lost,
Basely to give the conflict o'er!
Thou little know'st the ardour hot
Which burns the bosom of a Scot,
Who combats on his native shore!"
Sick grew his spirit as he spoke,
Yet still he rais'd him to the stroke:
In pain his labouring breath he drew,
His face was bath'd in deadly dew,
Faint, and more faint, his efforts grew;
With chilling heart, with nerves unstrung,

Feebly Mac Naughtan's brand he swung,
Then sank, and on the ground his massy hauberk rung!

XXXVIII.

Fare thee well, Græme! Time sweeps away,
Year after year with silent sway,
Yet never, from the roll of fame,
Shall tear the name of gallant Græme!
Fare thee well, warrior! myriads fall,
And mist and darkness wraps them all;
Yet while yon lamp still hangs on high,
From heaven's cærulean canopy,
Thou, noble, generous, patriot Scot,
Thy deeds shall never be forgot!

XXXIX.

Cease, lingering Muse! the partial tear
Which singly dews the corse of Græme!
A thousand spirits hover near—
Oh! give them all to fame!
Solemn and wild, and deep and high,

Pour thou the soldier's obsequy!
And spare thou not! The Muse's tear
Is the high guerdon of the brave,
And as it drops on his silent bier,
It tears his memory from the grave,
For the gem which gleams in the Muse's eye
Is the spark of immortality!

XL.

Where lifts Macduff his country's spear?
Gordon and Carrick! are ye fled,
Or see ye not what havoc drear
Thro' Scotland's ranks is spread?
Oh! hear ye not your mother's cries!
And feel ye not her miseries!
Carrick and Gordon's souls are fled,
But their bodies rest on their native plain!
Macduff is sleeping with the dead,
And his spear is broken in twain!
Brave Stewart bleeds from many a wound,
Yet his arm is good and his heart is sound:
And Bothwell true, in the centre fight,

Flashes his sword in the foeman's sight;
Nor fails their strength, nor spirit bends,
Tho' they wade in the blood of their dearest friends,
Undaunted yet—their home, their wives,
Their cherish'd country, still survives!

XLI.

Bold Wallace and his men of might,
With lion rage defend the right:
What shrieks of death, what showers of blood
Point to the spot where the chieftain stood!
What matchless power arms his hand!
What terror sits upon his brand!
Beneath the hoof of his armed steed,
Behold what hostile numbers bleed!
Dire, dire, and desperate in his mood,
His burning bosom thirsts for blood,
And while he bathes in English gore,
Relentless and unquench'd he sees the torrent pour!

XLII.

As he bears on the shrinking yeomanry,
Backward they cast the haggard eye,
And "Quarter! quarter!" is the cry;
But Wallace thinks on Scotland's woe,
On the childless mother's ghastly scream;—
His eye flashes wild on the trembling foe,
And death is in its beam!
"I cannot spare—for I have sworn,
By yon broad light that fills our sky,
No child of English mother born,
Unskaith'd beneath my hand shall lie!"

XLIII.

Brown Warwick marks the carnage dire,
Disgraceful flight and wild dismay:
Maddening, he sees his troops retire,
Ruin, and shame, and disarray
Trace every step of their recreant way:
His martial soul was on the rack,
When he saw his banner driven back,
And he tore the flag from the coward's hand,

And laid him lifeless at his feet,
While at the sight the wavering band
Suspend their swift retreat:
Then Warwick, lifting his fiery glance,
Beheld a youthful knight advance,
His hands were steep'd in English gore;
E'en the chanfron bright his courser wore,
With the horrid stream was splash'd and wet;
A black scarf wav'd his bosom o'er,
And from his lofty helm black flow'd the souleret!

XLIV.

As tyger, crouch'd in Indian glen,
Brown Warwick waited in his path;
"Thou art sign'd with the blood of Warwick's men,
Then taste thou Warwick's wrath!"
Earl Guy was stern, and fierce, and grim,
Of lion heart, and ponderous limb;
His dark eye roll'd on the stranger youth
A mingled glance of rage and ruth;
For he was griev'd, so slight a form
Must brave his wrath's vindictive storm;

He lifted not the iron mace
Which hung at his saddle-bow;
" Scorn not, young knight, a veteran's grace;
Yet, scarce commenc'd thy ardent race,
'Twere pity to lay thee low!
Too rough mine arm to sport with toys,
Too generous to contend with boys!"

XLV.

" Defend thee, earl," young Crauford cries,
And flash'd his brand in Beauchamp's eyes;
" The child who avenges a murder'd sire,
Shall match ten thousand men in ire.
Already, to the sacred dead,
A votive hecatomb has bled!
Already this boy's contemned arm
Has shed to his manes the oblation warm!
And the same arm may yet provide
A moral for earl Warwick's pride!"

XLVI.

The baron smil'd as Crauford spoke,
And warded scarce the undreaded stroke,
But loud his steeled corslet rung,
And pain and rage his bosom stung,
When his temper'd breast-plate broke!
A baldric, rich in gems and gold,
Wav'd o'er his ample chest;
It baffled the steel in its gorgeous fold,
And sav'd the threaten'd breast.

XLVII.

Then Warwick cried, "I like thee well!
Thy spirit is hot, and thy strokes are fell;
Even yet, go seek an equal foe!
Warwick is loth to lay thee low:
Quit me, good youth, for I am dire,
When passion sets my soul on fire!"
A second stroke young Crauford aim'd—
Sudden, the baron's fury flam'd,
Lifting on high his iron mace,
He dash'd it in the stripling's face,

And " Yield," he cried, " thy transient race!"
The angry blow was dealt too well,
The glittering casque in atoms fell!
Sinking beneath the ruin dread,
To earth young Crauford droop'd his head,
And o'er his sparkling eyes the mists of night were spread.

XLVIII.

The baron leap'd from his good grey steed,
And hung o'er the youth with tender heed;
Not often in the battle's heat
Had mercy touch'd his rugged breast,
But when he saw that blossom sweet
Lie crush'd and broken at his feet,
He felt the stranger guest,
And wip'd from Crauford's mangled brow
The blood which stain'd its driven snow:
The lofty spirit had not fled,
Young Crauford op'd his languid eye,
And as he rais'd his beauteous head,
With haughty speech and menace high,
Disclaim'd the gentle ministry!

XLIX.

" Cease, Warwick, thy insulting care,
But with my life my hate shall die!
Strike! for 'tis dangerous to spare
Who scorns thy clemency!
That coward treason, base and foul,
Which sent from earth my father's soul,
With hate, implacable and wild,
Has fill'd the bosom of his child!
By heaven, wer't thou beneath my feet,
No meek remorse should stay my hand,
But where the vital pulses beat,
Where all the springs of being meet,
Deep would I drive my brand!"

L.

Amaz'd, transfix'd, earl Warwick stood,
To see that fierce relentless flame,
'Mid failing life and wasting blood,
Still warm the fragile frame.
" Then keep thy life, and keep thy hate,
But yield thy sword to Warwick's trust,

And grieve not, since thy lenient fate
Sends thee a conqueror brave and just!"
Bending to earth, with soothing word,
Again he claims the forfeit sword;
What rage young Crauford's bosom shook,
As by the point his sword he took!
Half rising from the sanguine field,
He lifts the steel in act to yield;
Sudden, upon his pallid cheek,
Triumphant roses seem'd to break;
Sudden his half-extinguished eye
Shines in the light of ecstacy!
Where the black scarf his bosom veil'd,
A latent friend still lay conceal'd;
His right hand seiz'd the lurking guest,
And dash'd it to the baron's breast!
Despair's last effort, feebly dealt,
It fell, derided and unfelt!

LI.

Swift from earl Warwick's rage-stung heart
The softer sympathies depart;

Trembling with wrath, his foot he press'd
On the fall'n victim's heaving breast—
And "Die!" he cried, "envenom'd worm!
Thou demon in an angel's form!
Young ruffian, die! 'Twere folly's part
To warm an aspic in my heart!"
But while the blow suspended hung,
A whelming stroke his cuirass rung,
And from his menac'd prey the staggering baron flung!

LII.

A voice like thunder smote his ear,
"Turn thee, earl Guy! turn, valiant knight!
Fie, Warwick! Can'st thou linger here,
And stain thy sword, and shame thy might,
In putting infant souls to flight?
Know, each scaith'd hair of Crauford's head
Shall cost the proud earl Warwick dear!
And for every drop his veins have shed,
Thy heart shall weep a ruddy tear!
Turn, Guy, or dost thou only dare
To wage with boys the unequal war?"

LIII.

Then Wallace leap'd upon the foe,
Whose sense half slept beneath the blow;
Within the baldric's gorgeous band
He twists his unresisted hand,
And rudely drag'd his struggling prey
To where young Crauford stiffening lay.
Fair rose-bud! perish'd in its morn,
Rent early from the parent thorn,
And cast upon the field, all wither'd and forlorn!

LIV.

As o'er the silent youth he bent,
A grief-shot thro' his bosom went;
Angry, he smote his swelling breast,
And bade the unwarlike feeling rest,
For Wallace, with a father's eye,
Had mark'd this eaglet, towering high,
And fondly hop'd to see him stand,
The glory of the patriot-band,
A bulwark and a shield to guard his native land!

LV.

" By heaven, earl Guy, my ruthless heart,
All inaccessible and wild,
Had shuddered at thy savage part,
And turn'd my weapon from the child!"
Warwick spoke not, his heart was good,
But he was stout, and stern of mood;
He scorn'd to tell how long remorse
Had staid the falchion in its course,
And that same deed his soul disdain'd,
Once pass'd, his pride avow'd, and his bright sword maintain'd.

LVI.

And now, more deadly, fierce and fell,
Than the spent Muse has breath to tell,
The mortal combat grows!
Earl Warwick's helm has touch'd the ground,
Spouting, from many a ghastly wound,
The sanguinary river flows!
Dire, as a famish'd wolf, he turns,
Foaming, the gory earth he spurns;
With baffled wrath, unskill'd despair,

Idly he spent his strokes in air,
Whilst every gash his rival lent
Yawn'd wide, as it would give the mighty spirit vent!

LVII.

Yet the soul fled not.—Fierce and grim,
It would have still maintain'd the fight,
But the stunn'd brain and eye-balls dim,
The wasting strength, and failing limb,
Confess'd his foeman's might!
On his stern brow the pain-drops break,
And paleness shrouds his dusky cheek!
Anguish was in his mighty heart,
He felt his limbs forsake their part;
Feebly his arm the falchion wields,
Each trembling joint beneath him yields;
Still, still, he struggles!—'tis in vain!—
Conquer'd he sinks upon the plain;
On the pale rose his hand had crop'd,
All powerless, faint, and wan, the noble Warwick drop'd!

LVIII.

Still in his heart life's currents glide,
Again those eyes shall wake to day,
Those ponderous limbs, with giant stride,
Shall raise again their humbled pride,
And rush to many a future fray.
Wallace look'd up, the glorious sun,
Already half his course had run;
The burning wound, the smarting scar,
He felt not, reck'd not, but his soul
Wept, as he mark'd day's travelling star,
Declining towards the western goal!
That orb had risen on many an eye,
That blaz'd responsive light;
The orb still rides in the golden sky,
But the eye is set in night!
Many a rough hour has Wallace pass'd,
He has breasted the flood, he has brav'd the blast,
And his firm soul has held her mood,
While his feet were wash'd in kindred blood!
But now they are vanish'd, one by one;

He calls on his friends, his friends are gone,
And in the field of death Wallace seems left alone!

LIX.

Not all the joys which gild our span,
The bright extremes of human bliss,
Can pay the breast of mortal man,
For such an hour as this!
When the hero bends his spirit high,
And trembling owns humanity,
And when his stubborn heart must bow,
Beneath the scorpion-lash of woe,
As he marks each cherish'd phantom fly,
And his breast swells with hope's last sigh,
'Tis then from false illusion freed,
He grasps the fallen hero's meed—
Superior agony!

LX.

Hope's light yet shone in Wallace' eye,
Her mockery yet his heart possess'd!
"Hark! 'tis Græme's well-known battle-cry!

And yet methinks I can descry
His banner in the east!
Oh! gallant, bold, true-hearted Græme!
My arm and thine against a host!
Hold firm awhile thy dauntless frame,
Struggle awhile, lest life and fame,
And Scotland should be lost!
Now ye who fight your country's fight,
Whose nerves her mountain breezes brace,
Oh! let us perish for her right,
Nor basely view—disgraceful sight!
One shame-spot on her face!
Oh! follow me!—While blood, while breath,
While sense, one Scottish bosom fills,
Shall England's banner flout our heath,
And wave upon our hills?
Strike for your home, your laws, your lives!
Strike for your mothers and your wives!
Strike—for your father's ghosts are nigh,
On you they fix the haggard eye,
And sternly charge on you their country's destiny!"

LXI.

Few heard the call, few rais'd the head,
Few lifted high the hand of steel,
For cold and still the host lay spread,
They slept amid the torrent red,
They mov'd not from their lowly bed
At the chieftain's loud appeal.
But a few yet stood,
In their comrade's blood,
And rais'd the accusing eye to heaven,
Ghastly they frown'd
On their native ground,
Like oaks, by the lurid lightning riven!
They rouze at the sound of their chieftain's word,
They wake at the flash of his waving sword,
They start at the fire of his eagle glance,
And sweeping to revenge, forsake their sullen trance!

LXII.

Onward they rush with eager hearts,
Tho' the sky is darken'd with English darts.
They cannot pause to think or feel,

Tho' their armour rattles with hostile steel!
They turn not to avenge the blow,
But on, with dauntless step they go,
Cutting their pathway thro' the foe!
Hope whispers to the faithful band,
That Græme and Wallace, hand in hand,
Even yet shall stand on high, the rescuers of their land!

LXIII.

Meanwhile, forsaken and betray'd,
With fate bold Stewart wrestled strong;
His friends were round him silent laid,
And as he turn'd his eye for aid,
Amid the hindmost throng,
A fatal sound his ear oppress'd,
And deeply smote his patriot-breast:
He listen'd for the trampling tread
Of the mailed horse by Comyn led,
For he had sent to the chief for aid,
And marvell'd the succour was delay'd.
He listens! Carron's waters splash
Against her banks with boisterous dash!

What may they be, the armed throng,
Who buffet her waves with sinews strong?
He listens—faint, and fainter rang
The splash of the stream and the armour's clang;
And as he heard the sound decay,
Some demon in his breast sate mocking hope away.

LXIV.

Now, who was he, that coward slave,
Who cross'd the furrow of Carron's wave?
And whose was the heavy barded horse,
That toil'd to oppose the torrent's force?
And who was he, who basely fled
When the mighty men of his country bled?
Yes, I will soil the page of fame,
And brand it with the traitor's name!
Red Comyn, take thy meed—the meed of deathless shame!

LXV.

Pale wax'd the cheek of Stewart then,
Betray'd by his faithless countrymen;
Chill flow'd his blood, hard heav'd his breath,

He felt a pang more fierce than death;
He gaz'd upon the noble few,
Who round him bent the deadly yew,
And his soul kindled at the view:
"Patriots!" he said, "old Scotland's sons!
Fight in despair, for hope is past!
Swift, swift our sand of being runs;
But we will bear us to the last,
As keen and fell as Ettrick's blast!
Yon English lords shall tell their wives
How hunted lions sell their lives!"

LXVI.

Already yawning, wide, and sore,
Full many a wound his body bore;
But yet so stout, so firm his heart,
He smil'd as he felt the shivering smart:
Oh! worthy veteran! thy grey head
Shall soon repose in honour's bed!
Thy brow, no more with iron vex'd,
Thy breast no more with grief perplex'd!
Even now the death-bolt cleaves the air,

Which ends thy task, which heals thy care;
Even now thy feet approach the shore,
Where faction, falsehood, war, shall cease for evermore!

LXVII.

His failing hand, with bloodless veins,
No more the iron curb retains,
No more the falchion's weight sustains!
Within that breast, all torn with wounds,
Feebly the noble tenant bounds!
Powerless he fell, and to a man,
Rush'd to his aid his loyal clan!
"On, on, my friends!—'tis but a life!
On, on, and mingle with the strife!
'Tis sweet in Scotland's cause to die,
Amid my country's wreck to lie,
To close for her my weary eyes,
Proud sharer in her wrongs, her wounds, her miseries!"

LXVIII.

Many a heart in iron brac'd
Swell'd high as the faltering accents died;

Many a rough cheek in the bacinet cas'd
Was bath'd in a briny tide!
They had follow'd the chief from Yarrow's side,
He was their hope, their boast, their pride;
For him they left green Selkirk's glens,
Their broomy brakes and sylvan dens,
For ever left!—Their chase is o'er
Of the red deer swift, or mountain boar!
For ever left!—with *him* they came,
With *him* to the last they toil for fame,
Now round his much-lov'd corse a glorious death they claim!

LXIX.

They sought, and gain'd.—Of Bonkill's clan,
Pale, pale on the plain lies every man!
The glance of the morn had sparkled bright
On their plumage green, and their actons light;
The bugle was strung at each hunter's side,
As they had been bound to the chase to ride;
But the bugle is mute and the shafts are spent,
The arm unnerv'd, and the bow unbent,
And the tired forester is laid

Far, far from the clustering greenwood shade!
Sore have they toil'd—they are fallen asleep,
And their slumber is heavy, and dull, and deep!
When over their bones the grass shall wave,
When the wild winds over their tombs shall rave,
Memory shall lean on their graves and tell
How Selkirk's hunters bold around old Stewart fell!

LXX.

Lady Margaret shall sit in Bonkill tower,
From the dawning grey to the midnight hour!
She looks on the path which her hero press'd.
And heavy with care is her matron breast:
She had woven her knight a scarf of gold,
She had cas'd his limbs in armour cold,
She had bless'd him with averted eyes,
That he might not behold the tear-drop rise,
Yet she felt in her soul a patriot's pride,
As she girded the broad-sword on his side,
And saw her veteran lord go forth,
The glory and boast of her native north,

And thought he would reap on the field of fame
That harvest of the brave—a never-dying name!

LXXI.

He has carried the prize! but lady, long
Thou shalt watch from the tower for the martial throng!
His baldric bright thou shalt ne'er unclasp,
Nor release his brows from the helmet's grasp,
Nor grateful wring the wither'd hand
Of each grey vassal of the band,
For bringing thee back thy bosom's lord,
Unskaith'd by the edge of the southron sword!
Then get thee down from thy lofty tower,
And hide thee in thy secret bower!
Snatch the bright gem from thy yellow hair,
And wrap thee in the robes of woe!
Thou shalt sit by the taper's funeral glare,
While the bitter drops of wasting care
Shall wither thy beauty's glow!
Oh, lady! give thy watching o'er,
Thou lookest for him who returns no more!

LXXII.

Red Comyn! dar'st thou raise thine eye
To the day-light of thy native sky!
Red Comyn! dare thy vassal breath
Mix with the free blast of the heath,
That hardy blast which whilom blew,
To brace an offspring brave and true!
And dar'st thou trample that native mould,
Basely by thee betray'd and sold?
And dar'st thou, man of princely race!
Look one free peasant in the face?
Shunn'd by the loyal and the brave,
Go hie thee, Comyn, to the grave!
There hide thee deep—but with mankind,
A marvel and a mock thy name shall rest behind!

LXXIII.

Where is the forest, beneath whose shade
The hunter rode and the shepherd stray'd?
Where the brown oaks, which high and wide
Spread towards the heavens their arms of pride?
A curtain to the lover's dream,

A shelter from the noon-day beam!
I saw it shake its verdant boughs,
When the morning song of the birds arose!
The glittering leaves, with early dew,
Sprinkled the earth as the zephyr blew;
But the axe of the woodman rang aloud,
The lofty heads of the forest bow'd!
The forest is fallen, and side by side,
Stretch'd in the dust lie its arms of pride!
The pilgrim, when the rain falls fast,
And he feels the chill of the driving blast,
Trembling shall ask, and ask in vain,
"Where did the forest stand, the glory of the plain?"

LXXIV.

Wallace! and is it even thou!
Is the glow of thy lofty spirit cold!
And dost thou droop thy manly brow,
And fix thy keen eye on the silent mould?
And why those eager glances bend
On him, who once was Wallace' friend?
Oh! mourn him not!—for he was dead

Ere the latest hope of his country fled,
Ere the vital stream of her veins was spent,
Ere her heart was crush'd, and her banner rent,
Ere she lower'd to the dust her lofty crest,
And the conqueror trod on her humbled breast!
Græme's guardian angel, from on high,
Beheld the clouds in Scotland's sky,
And spar'd the hero's lip the untasted misery!

LXXV.

There was a light in Wallace' eye,
Wan as the lightning's livid glare.
Twas not that flame, whose ardours high
Kindle the patriot to the war:
Twas the pale frost-light of despair!
Wallace wept not, his burning brow
Was all too proud and stern to know
The soft relief of nature's flow!
No. Wallace wept not—cold and grim,
He fix'd a frozen glance on him,
Who, every change of fortune tried,
Had stood, thro' storm and fair, unsever'd from his side!

LXXVI.

And could he weep, whose eye beheld
His last friend slain, his country quell'd?
Ill can the gentler bosom guess
The hero's silent bitterness!
That mute, intense, concentred woe,
Only the mighty soul can know!
Awhile ambition's sun may gleam,
Gayly to gild his noon-day dream;
Night, wrapt in clouds, draws on at last,
And howling demons ride the blast;
Wide thro' the troubled sky they sweep,
And plunge the writhing spirit deep,
In pangs too dire to groan, and woes too fierce to weep.

LXXVII.

Wallace, desponding, chill, and faint,
Lean'd sad and silent on his sword,
His stern breast murmur'd no complaint,
Nor heav'd he sigh, nor utter'd word,
He scarcely deign'd to lift his eye,
Tho' the conquering foe were gathering nigh!

Oh! proud ascendancy of soul!
Alone that fallen hero stood!
And round him clustering thousands roll;
Yet his eye averts their flood!
Single he stands in the hostile field,
And thousands tremble to bid him yield!
Tho' Edward vow'd a guerdon bright,
And high renown should grace his might,
Who breathing and in chains should lead that matchless knight.

LXXVIII.

Who comes, the monarch's meed to claim,
Who rushes on with heart of flame,
Thinking to grasp the wreath of fame?
Slowly brave Wallace turn'd him round,
As the heavy war-horse beat the ground;
He heard the warrior's vaunting call,
He heard with a smile—a smile of gall!
For the bold Sir Brian was young and gay,
He had mingled lightly in the fray,
And idly hop'd to bear this glorious prize away!

LXXIX.

" Now yield thee, Wallace!—from the sky
Swift shoots thy meteor destiny!
Thou stand'st by foes encircled round,
Thy bosom bleeds from many a wound,
Come, point thy weapon to the ground!"
" Thy country's thousands have been taught,
'Mid hope and zeal, how Wallace fought!
I have seen the hour of my country close,
I stand alone in a field of foes!
Now prove, young boaster, if thou dare,
How Wallace combats in despair!"
As from his steed Sir Brian bent,
With uprais'd arm and stern intent,
The raging Wallace clasp'd him round,
And flung him gasping on the ground;
For he was strong in prosperous war,
But ten times stronger in despair:
Upon his prostrate foe he stood,
His thirsty weapon drank his blood;
Then vaulting in his lofty seat,

Onward he spurr'd the courser fleet,
And from that ghastly field he urg'd his late retreat.

LXXX.

The foe, who dar'd not face his might,
Press'd close and rapid on his flight!
They knew his wounds bled fast and sore,
For his courser's flank was sprinkled o'er
With the fearless warrior's unstaunch'd gore;
And they laugh'd to think that Carron's tide
Would baffle at length his stubborn pride;
For Carron's banks are rough and steep,
And the waters are rugged, and wild and deep!
He falters not, yet still they deem
He shall faint ere he wins the Carron stream;
They have loos'd their blood-hounds, and they think
To seize their quarry on the brink!
The night was closing, dark and drear,
And the hounds howl deep on his dauntless ear!
He has left the horsemen far behind,
But he hears their voices on the wind!
Ah! see! he has reach'd the Carron shore!

Spur, spur thy steed, the waters o'er!
Ah no!—o'erspent it sinks, to feel the spur no more!

LXXXI.

Still firm upon the bank he stood,
Tho' his temples throb'd, and his side rain'd blood,
And he look'd, in a short, yet desperate strife,
To sell the remains of his harrass'd life!
Deeper and deeper howl the hounds,
The dusky sky with shouts resounds!
But fate the hot pursuit beguil'd,
And on the hero darkly smil'd:
Deep gloom'd a covert on the left,
And wild woods nodded o'er the cleft;
From this an armed steed appears,
Whose back a beardless stripling bears;
"Mount, Wallace, mount!—No treachery fear!
To bear thee hence I linger here!
Oh! list—they come!—Oh! great and brave!
They come to snatch thee to the grave!"
Wallace, all stiffening with his wounds,
Yet on the barded courser bounds;

They pass the Carron's dangerous waves,
And weary, spent and faint, each foil'd pursuer raves!

LXXXII.

Rest thee, my Muse!—Thy sickening eye
Has dwelt too long on blood and death!
Thou hast dar'd to follow the battle-cry,
Thou hast watch'd a hero's destiny,
And hop'st to share his wreath!
And sure one leaf thy toils may claim,
Who boldly thro' the field of fame
Trac'd the red footsteps of the brave,
And shower'd, with swelling heart, thy tribute on their grave!

END OF CANTO THE FOURTH.

WALLACE.

CANTO THE FIFTH.

I.

Go ye, who bask in fortune's ray,
We gaze not on your shining day!
The patient Muse, with stoic pride,
Loves lingering by misfortune's side,
She turns not with the ebbing tide!
She watches the forsaken bed,
Where unmark'd merit droops the head,
And with fix'd eye she loves to wait
On the sullen step of the fallen great!
When fields are won and countries lost,

Oft flies she with the beaten host,
More pleas'd the proud defeat to share,
Than trace the conqueror's golden car!
The bursting heart, whose inward woe
'Tis not for common eyes to know;
The strong, unconquerable mind,
Which yields not to a world combin'd,
Which mocks reverse, which scorns disgrace,
And smiles in ruin's ghastly face
With features hard and stern—'tis such she loves to trace!

II.

"Now haste thee, master!—Torwoodlee
Still waves her boughs to shelter thee;
There, deep in tangled covert laid,
David shall yield thy anguish aid!
Already there, amid the dew,
Bothwell forgets 'tis pain to live—
A little band, a harrass'd few,
The mossy turf around him strew;
In dreams the haughty foe they drive,
And take from pitying sleep, what sleep alone can give!"

III.

" Say'st thou, my boy!—Can Bothwell sleep?
'Tis well!—his wounds shall cease to smart;
Mine rankle, cureless, fell and deep,
For they are in the heart!"
" Now cheer thee, master! cheer thee yet!
Thy spirit was not wont to faint,
Nor has the sun yet risen or set
That witness'd thy complaint!
Oh! yet despond not!—on the plain
Thy banner shall be spread again,
And thousands rush to war and triumph in thy train!"

IV.

" Stewart, the valiant and the just,
Veils his proud forehead in the dust!
Low lies Macduff, his noble corse
Is trampled by the English horse!
Gordon and Carrick breathe no more,
Their country's downfal to deplore!
Wake these!—and bid the eye-lids ope
Of Græme, old Scotland's stay and hope!

Græme, who in every gale that blew,
Was still her champion, tried and true!
Such souls has this day's havoc driven
From their unhappy land to heaven!
A thousand years may look thro' time,
And rue this day's disastrous crime,
And fondly wait the birth of spirits so sublime!"

V.

"And is Græme gone?—Oh! then, indeed,
Even thy stubborn heart must bleed!
Nor let my softer sorrows shame
Thy gallant shade, lamented Græme!"
They spoke no more, 'till the gale so free,
Wav'd o'er their heads the birken tree,
Which droop'd in pleasant Torwoodlee;
There Bothwell, and his weary men,
Lay slumbering in the darksome glen,
And slept with them the heavy guest
Which dwelt in every Scottish breast;
Yet did she not her post forsake,
With them she slept, with them to wake;

And she shall greet, with matin song,
Dead, dull, and comfortless, the rising of the throng!

VI.

The moon now hid, now dimly seen,
Cast a cold glance on the silent scene,
As the weary warrior flung him down,
Beneath the shade of the forest brown:
The tender page, with trembling hand,
Quick loos'd the morion's galling band,
That the breath of the freshening gale might blow,
To cool the heat that scorch'd his brow;
He gave him to drink of the limpid stream,
Whose wave was glistening in the beam,
And knelt by his side on the dewy ground,
And gently wash'd the gory wound,
And wept, to think that a festering smart,
Mocking the toils of zeal and art,
Wasted the vital stream that fed that gallant heart!

VII.

Wallace lay stretch'd upon the ground,
While David staunch'd the gaping wound;
The linen fine from his breast he tore,
To wipe the black and stiffening gore,
And as fast, and faster the gashes bled,
He had torn the linen shred by shred,
He had torn the tresses from his head,
To stay that torrent sore;
Then he thought on the scarf, the pledge of love,
For Wallace' breast, by Agnes wove,
And sobb'd as he rent its folds in twain,
"Fond token, be thou bless'd—Thou wert not woven in vain

VIII.

Thus pass'd the night—but morning now
On the forest look'd with blushing brow;
And from his slumbers, dull and sound,
Young Bothwell starting, gaz'd around;
"What may this mean?—Where are our men?
How came I loitering in the glen?
By holy Mary! yon gay beam

Has rouz'd me from a fearful dream!
Where are Macduff, and Ross, and Græme?
Ho! give me quick my spear of flame!"
To the young knight's impetuous cries
All sad and slow the page replies,
" Oh! bid thy vain illusions cease!
Macduff and Græme are gone to peace!
See where our country's hope is laid,
All mangled and forlorn, beneath the greenwood shade!"

IX.

A rapid ice-bolt, shivering, shot
Its chill to the heart of the noble Scot!
On his shuddering sense conviction rush'd,
" Yes! all is lost, and Scotland crush'd!
The firm, the faithful, and the brave,
Won in her cause a glorious grave;
But Bothwell crawls beneath her sky,
And basely lifts his coward eye,
Survivor of his own, and Scotland's liberty!"

X.

Wallace had spent that live-long night
In unbewailing bitterness;
And thro' the hours of its heavy flight,
Sorrow maintain'd her torturing right,
And mock'd forgetfulness:
While Bothwell rav'd o'er Scotland's woes,
All slow and sullen Wallace rose,
But the pale glance of the hero's eye
Was awful even in misery;
Then Bothwell's angry passion slept,
He could not quell the rising tide,
But all subdued his manly pride,
He look'd upon the chief—then turn'd his eye and wept!

XI.

"Bothwell, be firm and fix thy gaze
On years to come, on brighter days!
Yes, brighter days!—thy youth, thy name,
All promise fields of future fame!
Live, to avenge thy comrades dead!
Live, to uplift thy country's head!

But hie thee, Bothwell!—Loiter not!
Yon English blood-hounds are in chase;
With eager speed our steps they trace,
And their tongues shall lap the life-blood hot
Of many a harrass'd, hunted Scot!"

XII.

"Oh! Wallace! one word of guileful peace,
One word of homage insincere,
Shall bid the panting blood-hounds cease
Which follow *my* career:
But thou, illustrious hero, sign'd,
And mark'd, and noted from mankind!
When vengeance aims her death-bolt red,
Where wilt *thou* hide thy glorious head?"

XIII.

"Bothwell, since boyhood's merry hours
Swept o'er this head in Clyde's green bowers,
Thro' perils, treasons, storms, and wrath,
I have walk'd, unswerving from my path!
Our dizzy crags, our hollow caves,

Worn by the swell of the ocean waves,
These are my bed!—Oh! I have slept
Where the mountain-goat has trembling stept!
My weary limbs have safely laid
Behind the cataract's misty shade;
My curtain, the white foam of the linn,
My lulling song, its thundering din!
Then fear thee not, to Wallace' head
Sure Scotland's wilds and wastes will ne'er refuse a bed!

XIV.

Accustom'd, with unshrinking ear,
The howling blood-hound's voice to hear;
Taught to endure, to smart, to bleed,
Hardiest of Scotland's hardy breed;
No blast could chill, no toil could tire
My sturdy zeal, my patriot-fire:
The direst blow this heart ere felt
Scotland's maternal hand has dealt!
She doubts my truth, she fears my pride,
And drives her guardian from her side!
I yield—and oh! beneath her skies

May truer, braver sons arise!
Bothwell, my breast's forebodings tell
That this shall be a last farewell;
Then take my blessing, kind and warm,
Firm be thy soul, and strong thine arm;
And whether thou sink 'mid the conflict rude,
Or rise, by fortune unsubdued,
Still may thy country's love mark each vicissitude!

XV.

Where the majestic Grampians spread
Long shadows o'er old Ruskie's head;
Where stern Ben-Lodi lifts his brows,
Veil'd in a thousand winters snows;
Where friendship warms the escutcheon'd walls
Of frowning Ruskie's antique halls;
Thither I go—the true Menteith
Shall lend the blunted sword a sheath;
And thither, should my steps attend,
The insidious foe or hollow friend,
There, I may hold their wiles at bay
For many a weary night and day;

For there full many a cavern'd rock
Scowls o'er the wild and billowy loch;
The mountain precipice, the glen,
Untrack'd, unhaunted yet by men;
There shall the hunted quarry find
Meet refuge for his head, and shelter from mankind!"

XVI.

Young David wept—"Thy mangled side
Can ill the trial rude abide,
That waits thee in thy rugged ride!
But I have seen thy spirit's fire
Unquench'd thro' many a tempest dire;
And while thy faithful page is near,
Neglect, at least, thou shalt not fear:
When on thy brow the pain-drops start,
To tell how anguish wrings thine heart,
And should intenser pains provoke
Those groans which ne'er 'till now awoke,
This hand shall wipe thy dewy brow,
These duteous lips reply in echo to thy woe!"

XVII.

Wallace and Bothwell bade farewell,
And felt more than their tongues could tell:
Southward young Murray turn'd his face,
To ask the English warden's grace;
But for Wallace nor grace nor favour smil'd,
To shelter quick he must away,
For his heart's life-stream would hardly pay
The foe's envenom'd wrath—his rancour, deep and wild!

XVIII.

Where is the breast of iron mould,
Stern, inaccessible, and cold,
Which melts not when its proud distress
Is balm'd by pity's gentleness?
It pierces thro' the warrior's steel,
His cares to soothe, his wounds to heal;
It creeps into the rankling heart,
And if it cures not, lulls the smart;
All is not lost, if by our side
One faithful lingerer fondly stays;
But life's dark waste, so wild and wide,

Seems lessen'd on our gaze!
'Tis sweet on some familiar face
The mild reflected tear to trace,
And sympathy's responding sigh
Is music to the frozen ear of misery!

XIX.

David had fain beguil'd the way
With some quaint tale or simple lay,
For boys' and women's feebler woes
Surrender oft to the repose
Which such soft lullaby bestows:
Of Merddyn gaunt and wild he sang,
He sang of love, he sang of arms,
And still as they went the forest rang
With love's laments and war's alarms:
No gentle sound from Wallace' tongue
Repaid the zealous minstrel's song;
Sunk deep in musings harsh and drear,
Alas! it slept upon his ear!
While David watch'd the unvarying face,
And fondly hop'd thereon to trace

That not unfelt, the dulcet strain
Had won him from his sullen pain;
Then sigh'd, that the song had flow'd in vain;
Yet he rested him not, but again he sung,
And the brakes and dells with the carol rung.

XX.

"Oh! who is your chief, ye merrie men?
And where do ye wend, so blythe and free?"
"Oh! we rouze the red deer from the forest glen,
And our chief lives under the green-wood tree,
The pride and the boast of the north countrie!"

XXI.

"Now, what is that mighty hunter's name,
Ye merrie men—whisper his name to me?
For these bright eyes shall kindle a flame,
And the urchin love shall wrestle with fame,
In the heart of the pride of the north countrie!"

XXII.

"And ask ye, ladie, our chieftain's name?
His name it is William of Ellerslie!
Now turn ye, ladie, from whence ye came,
For never to greet the brightest dame,
Bent the brow of the pride of the north countrie!

XXIII.

"His arm it is strong to bend the bow,
And the mountain bulls before him flee;
He turns him in scorn from the feeble foe,
For an eye of fire, and a heart of snow,
Mark the pride and the boast of the north countrie!"

XXIV.

"Now on to the forest the ladie would go,
Where sate the bold hunter of Ellerslie;
He turn'd not in scorn from the beauteous foe,
And the glance of her eye it has melted the snow,
In the heart of the pride of the north countrie!"

XXV.

From Wallace' breast came a sullen groan,
" Now pray thee, David, sing no more!
That hunter is quell'd, that ladie is gone,
The forest is fallen, and the chase is o'er!
Oh! why dost thou sing of the days of yore?
Now tell me, my boy, where did'st thou learn
The lay thou hast sung in thy master's ear?
It thrills though his heart, so cold and stern,
It makes his hardy bosom yearn
On the things which once were dear!
Who taught thee to sing my marriage song?
And where hast thou stolen that honied tongue?
Methought, as it swept o'er my waken'd mind,
That the voice of the dead was on the wind!"

XXVI.

" Under the shade of Lanark's towers,
By the green glens and shaws of Clyde,
That song beguil'd the tedious hours,
As I sate all day by the forest side,
And waited the coming of eventide."

" And why did'st thou wait by the forest side
All day for the coming of eventide?"
" Oh! Wallace, my master was at the chase;
He wander'd o'er brake, and muir, and dell,
And I stay'd to behold his welcome face,
And to catch the first sound from his lips that fell;
For sweet to mine ear as the breath of morn
Was the blast of my master's bugle-horn,
And bright was his smile when he homeward hied;
But oft have I wept and oft have I sigh'd
For that silent horn 'mid the braes of Clyde!"

XXVII.

" Now, David, thy breast is of waxen mould,
Thy zeal is a mockery, light and vain,
And he is a fool who boasts his hold
On the heart which has lov'd, and loves again!
Now look in thy fickle breast and say,
And let not flattery vex mine ear;
Is it he whom thou servest so well to-day,
Or the master whom time has swept away,

'Mid the buffeting storms of life's career,
With whom to the end thou would'st persevere?"

XXVIII.

" My master, who rode thro' the forests of Clyde,
While I waited his coming at eventide,
Oh! his heart was proud and his arm was strong,
He could right the oppress'd and punish the wrong,
And rash was the foe who dar'd abide
The wrath which swell'd in his heart of pride!
The green bonnet shelter'd his manly brow,
It was white as Dunmaït's drifted snow;
Yet fierce and fell was my master's frown,
And a death-glance lurk'd in his eye of brown;
And courage, and hope, and fortune's ray,
All shone in his path, and lighted his way!

XXIX.

Wallace, thou wert a mighty oak,
'Till over thy head the tempest broke;
Thou hast lifted thy lofty looks on high,
But quench'd is the star of thy destiny;

Thou hast shone on the land like the beam of morn,
But thine arm has fail'd, and thy crest is torn!
I lov'd the master whom hope caress'd,
But thou, forsaken and unbless'd,
Yet greater than thy wrongs, 'tis thee I love the best!"

XXX.

" Come on, my boy! Whate'er betide,
No gale shall blow thee from my side!
Yet troth, poor youth, in evil hour,
Thou hast shelter'd in a riven tower;
The bitter blast howls in its walls,
And the roof may crush thee when it falls!
But I tell thee soft, in thy faithful ear,
Wallace is sick of lingering here!
His broken heart is bleeding sore,
And he longs for the time when it bleeds no more!
As thou sit'st on my grave wilt thou sing thy song,
And weep for the valiant and the strong,
And think how soon the dazzling ray,
Which gilded the morn of his transient day,
Shot from his brilliant sky, and perish'd quite away?"

XXXI.

They journey'd o'er mountain, down and dale,
O'er the wind-swept muir, and the shelter'd brake,
Yet the soul of the chief it did not fail,
And David was strong for his master's sake,
But he watch'd the clouds as they swiftly pass'd,
And listen'd, shuddering, to the blast;
The dark Ben Ledi near them frown'd,
And its caverns murmur'd a hollow sound,
And the owlet grey, with drowsy flight,
Greeted the coming shades of night:
He thought that the moon look'd dim and pale,
As on the mountain-brow she sate,
And he fancied the sighs of the fitful gale
Were mourning a hero's fate,
And he dar'd not give his dark thought breath,
As he pray'd for a loyal heart in the bosom of Menteith!

XXXII.

"Now, onward, my boy—direct thy gaze,
And say dost thou see yon reddening blaze,
Which scatters its glare o'er the distant stream,

And mocks the sick smile of the wan moon-beam?
'Tis the old warder's well-known light!
And hark! to the chime of the evening bell!
Oh! Ruskie! thy watch-fire glances bright,
Like the eye of a friend, on my weary sight,
And dear to my heart sounds the mournful swell,
As it swings on the air of thy curfew knell!"

XXXIII.

Now Wallace his warlike bugle blew,
And loud and cheerily blew he!
Menteith full well the signal knew,
And to the postern-gate he flew,
To greet the knight of Ellerslie:
" Now welcome! welcome! Thy bugle's breath
Is music aye to the true Menteith!
Oh! welcome in from the blast of night!
Come, come to the hall which blazes bright,
With the glancing eye and the taper's light!
Now say, dost thou bring us weal or woe,
That thy brow is so dark and thy speech so slow?
Where tarry thy troop, so bold and free?

Say, do they hasten to follow thee?
Or has thy doubting thrift denied
Old Ruskie's walls the honest pride
Of yielding a shelter, warm and wide,
To Wallace' patriot chivalry!"

XXXIV.

"Menteith, nor doubt, nor thrift he knows,
Whose open breast with honour glows!
I know them not!—Of all bereft,
My noble, honest heart is left!
Where are my men! Oh! good Menteith,
They sleep on Falkirk's field of death!
Of Fortha's cliffs the screaming brood
Have revell'd in their gallant blood,
And their souls in heaven are pleading now
For vengeance on yon regal robber's brow!"

XXXV.

Silent and gloomily, Menteith
Heard the dark tale of woe and death,
And he shrank from the comment rude and strong

Which he look'd should fall from Wallace' tongue,
Because he had left the battle plain
In the false Comyn's recreant train.
" Menteith, of all my faithful host,
This one poor relic yet I boast!
His slender form and unfledg'd cheek
But little hardihood bespeak;
Yet, from that day when Southron gore
First stream'd along my bright claymore,
A heart more zealous, firm, and true,
My changing fortunes never knew!
Be his the welcome, good Menteith,
That should be their's who sleep in death!"

XXXVI.

Oft smil'd Menteith, and oft he press'd,
In strict embrace, his gallant guest;
And now he groans that fortune's frown
Clouds for a while his friend's renown;
And now, thanks heaven, with moisten'd eye,
And many a deep and hard-heav'd sigh,
That in the hour of peril gave,

While hatred's direst tempests rave,
A home to bless and shield the persecuted brave!

XXXVII.

Oh! pass we on, while the red torch beam,
Thro' the long arch-way sheds its stream!
For the generous Muse, with sickening eye,
Looks on the treacherous courtesy;
She cannot bear the lips which smile
To cover the heart's envenom'd guile;
She looks beyond the polish'd brow,
Beyond the tongue's insidious flow,
And not from her the false caress
Conceals the bosom's hollowness;
Unveil'd before her shuddering eyes
All the base heart's dark secret lies;
There, ye avenging demons deep,
Plunge ye the fell envenom'd thorn!
Plague with your snakes its tortur'd sleep,
And to the lips the traitor steep
In infamy and scorn!
The ruffian fierce, the murderer spare,

But be the smiling traitor's share
Anguish that never dies—insatiable despair!

XXXVIII.

Oh! Wallace! however fortune frown,
Firm, simple faith is still thine own!
He who the ways of guile can trace,
Must long have commun'd with the base,
And thou could'st never bend thine eye
To the crawling course of treachery;
Thy spirit stoops not to detect
The shoals on which thy life is wreck'd,
Nor dost thou guess that monster strange,
A faithless friend, exists within the world's wide range!

XXXIX.

We will not pause to count the hours
Which slowly pass'd o'er Ruskie's towers:
Summer is gone, and the wintry sky,
All black with storms, lowers drearily;
Shrill come the wild winds o'er the waste,
And the old walls rock in the boisterous blast,

And the sullen sob of the water sprite
Is swept from the loch thro' the fearful night.
Thus fares it without, but blythe within,
The old walls ring to the minstrel's din,
They shine in the taper's social glow,
And smile while the wassel goblets flow,
And with merry mocks the jocund rout
The threatening voice of the tempest flout!
Wallace alone, a pensive guest,
Sits sad and silent at the feast;
His patriot soul nor sees nor hears,
But Scotland's heart-wrung groans and Scotland's bitter tears!

XL.

Who is it, that led by the watch-fire's light,
A shelter claims from the wrongs of night?
The storm beats rude, and the hour is late,
And strangers stand at the postern-gate!
And hark! as the tempest rattles fell,
How loudly they ring the castle bell!
"Ho! heap on the hearth the blazing fire,
And pile the hissing faggots higher!

And bid the goblet overflow,
That the shivering traveller's heart may glow!
And you, ye minstrels, gaily ring,
With fingers swift, the tinkling string!
Let warmth, and mirth, and cheer, await
The stranger who knocks at Menteith's gate!

XLI.

Now throw off your cloaks, so long and wide,
And forget that a tempest blew ye here!
For still 'tis the host of Ruskie's pride,
When his blood-red wine and his bright fire-side
The wanderer greet with sparkling cheer!"
Now near the hearth three strangers draw,
And the eye as it dwells on each ponderous form,
And marks each dusky brow with awe,
Owns they were champions meet to combat with the storm!

XLII.

The bell is tolling the midnight hour,
Methinks 'tis a dull and heavy sound,
Though wine and wassel freely pour,

And music echoes round:
What did it say to every heart,
That the host and his guests gave a shuddering start?
All, save the sad knight of Ellerslie,
And David, who sate at his master's knee.
What did it say to the brave Menteith,
That blanch'd his cheek with the hue of death,
And his merry tale, so suddenly broke,
When the awful tongue of midnight spoke?
What did it hint!—What might it say?
Methinks it has spoken fearfully!
For Menteith is struggling to be gay,
He calls aloud for the merrie lay,
That his thoughts may be drown'd in revelry.

XLIII.

'Mid the minstrel's train then rose a man,
Of spectre form and wild attire;
As along the harp his fingers ran,
Oh! they were ghastly, shrunk, and wan!
His body was wasted to a span,

And his eye shed a baleful fire!
Who might abide of that stranger's face
The dreadful lineaments to trace?
Now when, or how, or why he came,
None to his neighbour could disclose,
But his aspect drear and wither'd frame
Each mute beholder froze!
But list! he strikes!—With rapid change,
How loud and wild the prelude sweeps!
Now soft, now deep, now sad and strange,
The charm thro' each rapt' bosom creeps,
And nearer yet the breathless throng
Incline the greedy ear to drink that minstrel's song!

XLIV.

"List! list! in silence bend around,
As to the harp your senses grew!
For hark! in magic fetters bound,
The boisterous tempest's rushing sound
Is sunk in silence too!

XLV.

The winds are hush'd! the storm is stay'd!
Pauses awhile the angry night!
Who was it that the winds forbade,
And heaven's tremendous war delay'd?
Whose was that voice of might?

XLVI.

'Twas mine!—I bade the tempest stay!
For 'tis a time when fiends have power,
When men their brother men betray,
And fate, with unseen, silent sway,
Leads on the hero's hour!

XLVII.

When wrapt amid the shades of night,
We mark the spotted murderer prowl,
As we track his step with fiery sight,
We gaze not with such fell delight,
For heaven may touch *his* soul!

XLVIII.

But the false friend! the smiling foe!
Him shall eternal mercy save?
No! living he must learn to know
The forfeit spirit's hopeless woe,
And die the demon's slave!

XLIX.

Now mark my song!—now list my lay!
A prophet's hand is on the string!
He marks that morn of black dismay,
Which plants, 'till Scotland's latest day,
Her bosom's deepest sting!

L.

Rushes the dark scene on mine eye!
I see it now!—I see it all!
Shrieks on mine ear a nation's cry!
I hear her helpless, hopeless cry,
As she sees her champion fall!

LI.

Oh! bound in slavery's galling chain,
What fetter'd warrior do ye lead,
Whose eye nor weeps, nor lips complain,
As with a smile of stern disdain,
He takes the hero's meed?

LII.

What is that meed?—Ah! mark ye not
Yon hurrying crowd's distemper'd mirth?
'Tis the dark death-scene of a Scot!
They sweep, they drive, with ardour hot,
The mighty from the earth!

LIII.

Nor see ye, bleaching in the blast,
Those mangled relics of the brave!
Can ye your slavish glances cast
Upon yon vulture's foul repast,
And dare not yield a grave?

LIV.

But hark! It comes!—I know it well;
'Tis the gliding step of treachery!
Who tolls so deep a hero's knell?
Ah! who has burst the pageant spell?
Swift, swift, the misty curtain fell,
And veil'd futurity!"

LV.

The song was silent, yet around,
Awe-struck and mute each listener frown'd:
A chilling horror crept o'er each,
It froze their veins, it still'd their speech.
There, pale and gasping, you might see
How looks detected treachery!
Mark how the visage of Menteith
Looks as it felt the damps of death!
Mark well his eye's dilated glare,
His quivering lip, and lifting hair!
Mark, how his trembling hand essays

In vain the heartening bowl to raise,
And mark, how conscience-struck, he shudders as you gaze!

LVI.

What is the cloud so dull and dense
That hangs on Wallace' eye,
That he alone, with blunted sense,
Should listen drowsily,
As if that strain, so wild and dread,
An opiate o'er his cares had shed?
No lurking fraud, with hand unbless'd,
With purpose, murderous and foul,
Has hover'd near the trusting guest,
And all unseen, has slyly press'd
The sleep-juice in his bowl!
Yet, had he waken'd to the strain,
To him its voice had spoken in vain,
For childhood gay, and sanguine youth,
Had fled, nor left a doubt behind,
And Menteith's honour, faith, and truth,
Shone bright in Wallace' mind!

LVII.

Hark! what a hollow murmur came
From yon mysterious minstrel's frame!
Stretch'd is that ghastly hand in death?
Ceas'd has that damp, ungenial breath?
Quench'd is that hollow eye, whose flame
Beheld what mortals dare not name?
Hark! how the wide hall echoing rings,
As bursts the harp's prophetic strings!
Hark! to the tempest's sudden roar!
The spell which bound its winds is o'er!

LVIII.

Now Menteith gives the signal round;
Each to his midnight couch departs,
Hopeless to taste those slumbers sound
Which steep unburthen'd hearts.
David's misgiving eye had seen
Each stranger guest's portentous mien;
Well mark'd he, that a summons drear
Had smote each pallid listener's ear,

And whisper'd horror to the bold,
When stern and loud the hour-bell toll'd;
He had seen the cheek of Menteith bleach
At the dread wizard's boding speech:
That dreadful song!—that song of death,
Which burst his frame who gave it breath,
Was it not like the ponderous swell
Of a perish'd hero's funeral knell!

LIX.

"Wallace, awake!—Oh! sleep not now!
Wallace, awake, awake!
Thy Agnes calls!—Oh! from thy brow
These treacherous slumbers shake!"
In vain she calls, she raves, she weeps,
Still fraud succeeds, and Wallace sleeps!
Now all the wife's vain anguish breaks,
'Tis Agnes kneels, implores, and shrieks—
Agnes' swift-falling tears that rain on Wallace' cheeks!

LX.

" He moves not, hears not! 'tis in vain!
And shall I idly thus complain,
While the swift hour is gliding by,
And treachery, with her lurking train,
Leads on his destiny!
Oh! for that blessed power, which gave
The heart to hope, the strength to save,
When, from the following dogs of war,
I snatch'd my hero o'er the wave,
And felt the proud success of those who nobly dare!"

LXI.

" Oh, lady! is it hope that speaks,
And gleams across thy pallid cheeks?
Go on, then—at her mandate go!
Follow her bidding, false, yet sweet;
Go, seek the hollow-hearted foe,
And learn how hope can cheat!"
Now by the taper's wavering glare
Glides the light form down the narrow stair;

She hears not the blast which shakes the hall,
She starts not at the screech-owl's call,
She sees not the shadow-darken'd wall.
" Who knocks at Menteith's chamber door?
Say, is he bound, and the struggle o'er?
Then bear him quickly hence, I'll see his face no more."

LXII.

Oh! sounds of woe! with wild despair
The lady wide the portal throws:
Unbraided flows her yellow hair,
Her pallid cheek—her eye-balls glare,
The astonish'd villain froze!
" And was it thou, Menteith, who spoke!
Or was it but some raven's croak?
Or shriek'd some demon on mine ear
Those words of infamy and fear?
Oh! yet, Menteith!—Oh! yet relent!
Oh! yet revoke thy foul intent!
Have pity on thine ancient race!
Oh, spare it yet this dark disgrace!
Let them not curse thy mother's fame,

And murmur, with indignant shame,
She bore the first Menteith that ever soil'd the name!"

LXIII.

" Soft ye, I pray! Menteith would learn
Whence comes reproof so rude and stern,
And who, and what ye are, and why
Ye break my chamber's privacy?
Be brief, I pray! for thou may'st see
I mark thy chiding drowsily;
And I would fain thy counsel hear,
With open and unslumbering ear!"

LXIV.

" Then hear, Menteith—'tis Wallace' wife
Who kneels and begs her hero's life!
That Agnes, whose ill-fated head
Hardly escap'd the ruin dread,
Which shed for her its fire-flakes red:
Whose daring love long strove with fame
Yon matchless patriot's soul to claim,

Presumptuous strove! When ruin broke,
She felt 'twas destiny that spoke!
She knew the warning from above,
And rous'd her from her dream of love;
She broke her mighty captive's chain,
And lent him to the world again:
Trembling, I fled the conflict rude,
For Manuel's holy solitude:
Wallace, alas! believ'd my fate,
Had yielded to our foeman's hate,
And still believes.—A deep disguise
I vow'd to wear in penance drear,
And veil his Agnes from his eyes,
'Till Scotland's hopes no more follow his wild career!"

LXV.

" Well, lady, hast thou kept thy vow,
And heaven absolves thy penance now!
Even now heaven turns a frowning eye
Upon thy hero's destiny!
Too long in arrogance he soar'd,
Too long usurp'd the avenger's sword,

Too long his country's barons bow'd,
Observant of his aspect proud!
His time is come—his hour is past,
The bold presumer falls at last!
His sword is broke, his hands are bound,
And his great name an empty sound!
What could he hope!—His meteor ray
Has spent its fire—has blaz'd its day!"

LXVI.

" Oh! false Menteith!—Oh! traitor foul!
Think'st thou there is a God in heaven!
A God whose eye is on thy soul!
And dost thou look to be forgiven!
Where shall that trembling soul be driven?
Oh! think, ere yet the demons yell,
To plague that spirit false and fell,
Ere twisting serpents hissing rend
The bosom that betray'd its friend;
Think yet, Menteith!—Heaven gives thee time!
Have mercy on thy soul!—Oh! plunge it not in crime!

LXVII.

How wilt thou bear life's future span,
Mark'd thro' the world—a branded man?
Pointed and spurn'd at by the just,
Him, whom nor friend nor foe may trust!
The host, who smiling, gives his guest
A poison'd goblet at the feast!
Say, what reward can Edward give
A deed which makes it shame to live?
What glittering bribe allures thine eye,
Of price, to purchase infamy?
Oh! can that mighty monarch spread
A veil to hide those forms of dread,
Which plague, with eager shrieks, the villain's dying bed!"

LXVIII.

" Now hush thee, lady! gentler speech,
Well might thy fallen fortunes teach;
And, but I pity thee, and know
To yield to thy distemper'd woe,
Or I might hardly brook the wrong
Which falls from thy ill-govern'd tongue!

But, lady, let a friend prevail,
And know the heart thou would'st assail
Is ice, is adamant—a rock,
Which braves unmov'd thy passion's shock!
The conscience thou would'st touch is sear'd,
For every natural pleader heard,
Interest with golden tongue spoke best, and is preferr'd!"

LXIX.

" Oh! yet, Menteith! can'st thou forget,
Hast thou no throbs of fond regret!
Can'st thou forget the mutual truth
Which brighten'd all the scenes of youth,
Or that still greener, tenderer tie,
Which bound your hearts in infancy!
Yet, bid thy heart to pity wake,
Oh! bid it yield for memory's sake!
Lo! at thy feet!—Lo! in the dust!
Agnes adjures thee to be just!
Oh! yet, Menteith, my hero save!
Oh! succour yet the fallen brave!
Oh, God! he hears me not!—in vain, in vain I rave!"

LXX.

Hope, and her visions, all depart;
She starts indignant from the ground!
Oh! now despair is in her heart!
Her eye is wild, her brain whirls round!
She turn'd, and fix'd upon Menteith
The icy glance that look'd like death;
A curse fell from her glassy eye,
And smote his bosom heavily!
With footsteps fleet she runs, she flies!
She has glided up the narrow stair,
In vain she rolls her eager eyes,
Her husband is not there!
There was his chamber, there his bed,
The pillow which had borne his head!
She laugh'd, with phrenzy in her eye,
'Twas the dreadful mirth of agony!

LXXI.

Again she flies—she has found him now
A wretched captive, vanquish'd, bound,
With grief-wrung heart and dewy brow,

And stretch'd in fetters on the ground!
He hears her voice—he hears her screams,
Truth, like a dismal vision, gleams;
He sees her scatter'd tresses wave,
Like corpse-lights streaming towards the grave!
She comes! his arms would fain have press'd
The frantic mourner to his breast!
To faith so prov'd, to truth so tried,
This last poor tribute was denied,
Agnes beheld her lord with bursting heart, and died!

LXXII.

Now, ye who list, with Wallace go,
To mark the closing scene of woe!
I cannot!—On the failing string,
With faltering touch, my fingers ring!
The sorrowing Muse her wing has spread,
And tir'd of earth, is heaven-ward fled!
I wake! and all the sounding theme
Seems like a sleep-erected dream!
But 'tis not so.—Tho' Wallace' dust
Is long since scatter'd by the gust,

His name lives still, cherish'd and shrin'd
In every Scottish patriot's mind!
Perchance his spirit hover'd nigh,
And as I pour'd the descant high,
Drank of the votive strain, and bless'd it from the sky!

THE END.

NOTES.

NOTES.

CANTO THE FIRST.

For of old Dunblane, the saintly throng. Stanza III. l. 3.

Dunblane is a small town to the north of Stirling, where David the 1st founded a bishopric, and which was in darker days a seat of the Culdees.

Like that which gilded St. Mary's eve! St. IV. l. 14.

The 21st of July, A.D. 1298. On the succeeding day was fought the memorable battle of Falkirk.

Had ye forgot, when Norway's host. St. VI. l. 7.

In the year 1263, Haco, of Norway, made a descent on Largs, at the head of 20,000 men. He was met and defeated by Alexander, the Stewart, who slew 16,000 Norwegians: numbers perished in the waves, attempting to gain their ships. Haco himself with difficulty escaped to the Orkneys, where he died of grief for his defeat, and the loss of a favourite kinsman, who was killed in the battle.

From Roslyn to the fields of Clyde. St. VIII. l. 1.

Sir Henry St. Clair, of Roslyn, during these wars, was conspicuously on the patriot side. He outlived them, and the Bruce, and accompanied the good Sir James Douglas on his journey with the royal heart to the holy land.

Fierce from the west Lochaber came. St. VIII. l. 4.

Macpherson, of Lochaber, a rude but valiant chieftain, whose clan, called Clanchattan, was originally from Caithness, from whence they emigrated during the reign of Kenneth the 2d. Their crest was a cat sitting, with the motto, "Touch not the cat but a glove." This clan used to fight with steel helmets, short leather doublets, bare thighs, and round targets on their arms.—*Nesbitt's Scot. Her.*

The grim Macdowall joins the fight. St. IX. l. 2.

The Macdowalls were a family of great note in Galloway, being a younger branch of the ancient lords of that country: they suffered with peculiar severity from the devastations of Edward. According to Camden, their crest, the crowned lion, was conferred on Fergus of Galloway by Henry the 1st of England, in reward for some signal exploit performed in his service.—*Nesbitt's Her. vol.* 1.

Hints at a deed so dark and foul. St. X. l. 10.

The author has here used a poetical licence, as history places the circumstance alluded to on the 28th of August, 1298. The father of young Crauford being sheriff of Ayr, was, with other powerful gentlemen in the neighbourhood, during a cessation of hostilities, inveigled by the English, on

pretence of holding a conference, into some large barns at Ayr, which as they separately entered, a running noose was slipped over their necks, and they were thus perfidiously murdered.

> " Sir Rannald first to make fewty for his land,
> The knight went in and would no longer stand,
> A running cord they slipped over his head
> Hard to the baulk, and hanged him to dead," &c.
>
> BLIND HARRY.

Proud of his youth, his strength, his name. St. XI. l. 1.

Sir Andrew Moray, of Bothwell, was son to Sir Andrew Moray, the faithful friend and companion of Wallace, who was killed at the victorious fight of Stirling, on the 15th of Sept. 1297.

A soft, but not inglorious cause. St. XII. l. 1.

Lord Robert Ross, of Werke castle in Northumberland, being much in love with a Scottish lady, resolved to join the confederacy of her countrymen, to whom he escaped privately, after having in vain attempted to bring over his kinsman, lord William Ross, of Hamlake. His open defection, and the burning of the town of Prestfen, an exploit which he performed almost immediately after, in opposition to the troops of Edward, may be considered as the signal for unmasked hostility between the Scots and English.

Thy country's blessing on thy name. St. XIII. l. 1.

Sir John Græme, of Dundaff, was the companion in arms and unwavering friend of Wallace. It would be an endless task, and foreign to the subject, to enumerate the gallant and

loyal actions of this illustrious family, through a succession of ages; but the prophetic allusion in the following lines relates to the noble James Graham, marquis of Montrose, who, after valiantly struggling in the cause of his sovereigns, the Stewarts, fell a victim to republican cruelty.

But see, with limbs of giant size. St. xiv. l. 1.

Duncan Mac Naughten, of Argyle, whose family bore for their crest an embattled tower; he was a brave and warlike man, and his clan was held in high estimation over the West Highlands.

Dalziel, of ancient daring vain. St. xvi. l. 3.

Kenneth the 2d being desirous of rescuing the body of a friend or kinsman who had been seized by the Picts, and ignominiously exposed on a gibbet, offered a reward to the man who would undertake to execute the hazardous enterprize. All were silent, till a gentleman stood forth and uttered the words Dal-ziel, signifying in the Gælic, I dare; and accordingly he executed the task to the king's satisfaction. Such is the traditionary origin of the name of the Dalziels.—*Nesbitt's Scott. Her. vol.* 1.

Jardine nor toil nor danger tired. St. xvi. l. 5.

The arms of the Jardines were argent, a saltier and chief gules, and three spur-rowels, also a spur-rowel for the crest.

And Ramsay, thy imperial bird. St. xvi. l. 7.

Sir Alexander Ramsay and Sir William Ramsay, both of Dalhousie, in Galloway, were, during the struggles of Scot-

land, eminent patriots. Their arms were an eagle displayed sable on a field argent.

And Scrymgeour, in far distant years. St. XVI. l. 13.

The first who bore the name of Scrymgeour, which signifies hard-fighter, was Alexander Carron, who received it in reward of his valour from his sovereign, Alexander 1st, A. D. 1107. That monarch, having discovered a plot against his life, pursued the rebels, with some of his friends, along the water of Spey, which the rebels having passed before the king could overtake them, his small army made a stand, being afraid of the water, which by this time overflowed its banks. Whereupon Carron seized the standard from him who had hitherto borne it, and encouraged the rest to follow. The office of standard-bearer became from this time hereditary in the family. Buchanan places this circumstance in the reign of Malcolm the 3d.

'Till the voice of the bold Bonkill is heard. St. XVIII. l. 14.

Sir John Stewart, of Bonkill, was second son to Alexander, high steward of Scotland: he was one of the three chief leaders at the fatal battle of Falkirk, where he commanded a numerous body of Selkirk bowmen.

Comyn, to thy secret breast give heed. St. XX. l. 1.

Well known in history as the red Comyn, a name which he derived from his complexion. He shared with Wallace and Stewart the command of the army at Falkirk.

The winking owl, from his murky hole. St. xxvii. l. 9.

It is said by Major, that Sir John Stewart frequently upbraided Wallace for his pride, comparing him to an owl, which, after begging a feather from better-dressed birds, became proud of their spoils, and exalted himself above them. Blind Harry speaks for him thus:

> " Wallace, he said, you take thee meikle cure:
> So fared it by working of Nature,
> How an owlet complained of his fethreme,
> While dame Nature took of ilk bird, but blame
> A fair feather, and to the owlet gave,
> Then he thro' pride rebuted all the lave." &c.

Has he forgot thy vassal vow? St. xxix. l. 10.

The Muse has here availed herself of her charter: it was John Comyn the black, who distinguished himself by the peculiar servility of his submission to Edward, at the castle of Norham, on the 11th of June, 1291; but the behaviour of his son at Falkirk, and his subsequent perfidy to Bruce, exculpate the Muse from any very flagrant injustice in attributing to him the same traits which marked the political conduct of his father.

What, is the day forgot and gone? St. xxxv. l. 5.

When Edward, after having made Baliol his captive, settled Scotland, he appointed Ormsby justiciary of the kingdom, who took up his residence at Scone, where he held his courts; from thence Wallace, assisted by Sir William Douglas, drove him, and it was only a most precipitate flight that saved his life. This was one of the earliest achievements that marked the career of Wallace.

Then Cressingham, we pour'd thy blood. St. XXXVI. l. 9.

Cressingham, who with the old earl of Warenne led the English forces at the battle of Stirling, fell a victim to his own rashness, and was so hateful to the Scots, that his body was treated with every possible indignity. "The earl fled in such haste to Berwick, that his steed, being put up in the stable of the friars minors, never after tasted meat, but died."—*Dugdale.*

NOTES ON CANTO THE SECOND.

Of late in grey Kincardine's tower. St. v. l. 5.

Kincardine castle, anciently the principal seat of the Græmes, is situated in Strathern, about twenty miles north-east of Stirling, near the northern margin of the Ochills, on the edge of a romantic glen watered by the Ruthven.

Close to my couch Sir Patrick stood. St. v. l. 12.

The elder brother of Sir John Græme, who fell after a gallant conflict, almost singly maintained, in the battle of Dunbar, in which he obstinately stood his ground to the last, after the defeat and flight of his countrymen.

Yon Cambrians, harness'd to the yoke. St. IX. l. 19.

Previous to the battle of Falkirk, the band of Welch whom Edward had led with him into Scotland, mutinied in a fit of intoxication, and slew eighteen English ecclesiastics. The outrage was retorted with sanguinary fury; whereupon the Welch quitted the army, hovering, however, near it, and leaving little doubt, that had fortune favoured the Scots, they would have joined the conquerors.

In four close schiltrons, sharp and bright. St. XI. l. 14.

The schiltron was a circular body of spearmen, two, three, or more deep, whose crossed or serried weapons presented a most formidable barrier, and was compared to the impenetrable panoply of the hedge-hog.

She whom it bids me think upon. St. XVI. l. 6.

There is an odd story related by Blind Harry, of the English having slain the wife of Wallace, during the night, at Lanark, and of the signal vengeance taken by him and his adherents on the murderers, every one of whom the following night they burned to death. The minstrel thus briefly notices the murder of our hero's wife:

> " When Southron saw that 'scaped was Wallace,
> Again they turn'd, the woman took on case
> Put her to death, I cannot tell you how,
> Of sick matter I may not tarry now," &c.

" Now, by Saint Fillan's arm!" he said. St. XX. l. 6.

St. Fillan was abbot of Pittenween, in Fife; but having resigned his dignity, died a hermit amid the wilds of Glenurchy.

While transcribing the scriptures, his left hand sent forth in his aid a wonderful illumination. It is said by Leslie, that Robert the Bruce obtained possession of this splendid arm, and used to carry it in a silver shrine at the head of his army. That previous to the battle of Bannockburn, his chaplain removed the invaluable relique from its shrine, to deposit it in a place of security; but while Robert was addressing his prayers to the empty casket, it was observed to open and shut suddenly, and the saint was found to have taken the trouble of replacing his arm in the shrine.

That leads to Gilcomgain's ruin'd rath. St. XXIII. l. 19.

Gilcomgain was Maormor of Mearns, and first husband to the grand-daughter of Kenneth the 4th, Gruoch, afterwards so well known as the Lady Macbeth. He was perfidiously burned with fifty of his followers, during the night, in his fortress, by order of Malcolm the 2d.

I spent in Finella's fatal tower. St. XXIII. l. 21.

Finella murdered the great Kenneth the 3d, in revenge for the death of her son. Buchanan, from Boëtius, gives a curious account of the transaction. She dissembled her anger, and invited the monarch to her castle of Fettercairn, a place then pleasant for its shady groves and piles of ancient buildings. After having entertained him very splendidly, on pretence of taking him to view the pleasantness of the place and the structure of the castle, she led him into a private room to shew him a brass statue, which was so ingeniously constructed, that when a string, which was secretly bent therein,

was let go, it would of its own accord shoot forth arrows; and whilst Kenneth was intently viewing it, it shot him.

By night on the dusky plain of haunted Monivaird! St. XXIII.

Kenneth the 4th was killed at Monivaird, or the Plain of the Bard, in a great battle with Malcolm the 2d. It is in the upper part of Strathern; a large cairn marks the field of battle.

When fair Joleta led the dance. St. XXVII. l. 4.

"On the solemnization of the second marriage of Alexander 3d with Joleta, daughter of the Count de Dreux, as the bridegroom led the bride in the dance, followed in the same by many lords and ladies, there appeared at the last a creature resembling death, all naked of flesh and lire, with bare bones, right dreadful to behold, through which spectacle the king and residue of the company were so astonished, that they quickly made an end of their dance."—*Hollinshed's Scot. Chron.*

Who is it that rides thro' the night so fast? St. XXVIII. l. 1.

Alexander the 3d was thrown from his horse from the cliffs at Kinghorn, on the eastern coast, whither he was riding late from Edinburgh, a year after his marriage with Joleta. Southwell says, the night on which this disaster happened was so tempestuous, that he, "and many others who then lived and felt it, durst not uncover their faces against the bitter northern blast, that drove the snow and sleet most vehementlie against them." Thomas of Erceldoune is reported to have prophesied both the storm and the death of the monarch.

The maiden blossom of the north. St. XXVIII. l. 11.

Margaret, the Maid of Norway, was grand-daughter and heir of Alexander, by his daughter Margaret, who married Eric, king of Norway. The young queen, on coming to take possession of her dominions, died in one of the Orkneys.

Sir Adam Gordon, old in fight. St. XXXIV. l. 24.

A gallant and noble chieftain of Galloway.

And martial Carrick's eye of fire. St. XXXIV. l. 26.

Sir Gilbert Carrick, of Cassillis, hereditary baillie of Carrick, was immediately descended from Fergus, lord of Galloway, and Duncan, the first earl of Carrick, and was maternal ancestor of the earl of Cassillis. Amid the universal submission, forced and voluntary, paid by the Scottish barons to Edward, and which remains on record, it deserves to be noted in favour of the stubborn patriotism of this family, that the names of its individuals are not to be found in any of those acknowledgments of national weakness.

And the well-known banner of Menteith. St. XXXV. l. 3.

We are told that a strong band of private friendship united Sir John Menteith and the gallant Wallace. From Blind Harry, and other authority of the same description, I gather, that Wallace was twice gossip, or sponsor, to Menteith's children.

NOTES ON CANTO THE THIRD.

The brave earl Guy—a fearful name. St. VII. l. 1.

Guy Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, was son to the earl of Warwick who fought in the battles of Dunbar and Stirling. At the time of the fight of Falkirk he was twenty-six years of age; he was remarkable for his swarthy complexion. So much did he distinguish himself at Falkirk, as to obtain in reward grants of many of the confiscated lands of the Scottish nobles.—*Dugdale's Baronage.*

And gallant Ralph de Monthermer. St. VII. l. 6.

Ralph de Monthermer was permitted to use the title of earl of Gloucester, because he, a simple esquire, did marry Joan of Acres, widow of Gilbert de Clare, the last earl, whose son was a minor, and in wardship of the king.—*Dugdale's Baronage.*

The loftiest of the armed train! St. VIII. l. 14.

Anthony Beik, bishop of Durham, who so powerfully assisted Edward in his Scottish war, was one of the most remarkable men of his time for courage, power, and magnificence; his ordinary retinue consisted of a hundred and forty knights, and he could bring six-and-twenty standards into the field.

Sir Ralph, his rival in the fight. St. xi. l. 1.

Sir Ralph Bassett, of Drayton, with the bishop of Durham, led the second column of the English forces at the battle of Falkirk.

For this, Launde's venerable train. St. xi. l. 22.

Launde abbey, in Leicestershire, was founded by Sir Ralph Bassett's ancestors, the Bassetts of Sapcote.

The false Cospatric of Dunbar! St. xiii. l. 15.

Cospatric, earl of March and Dunbar, followed the banners of the enemy of his country throughout these wars. Much of the success of the English at the sanguinary siege of Berwick was attributed to him, as he obtained possession of the citadel by stratagem. At the famous battle of Dunbar he was opposed by his own more loyal countess, who fortified Dunbar castle against the English.

Lord Berkeley was a gallant knight. St. xiv. l. 1.

Thomas lord Berkeley, with his son Sir Maurice, both distinguished themselves at the battle of Falkirk: the former had been a famous warrior, and the latter, though young, had already borne away the prize at several tournaments, and evinced a very martial temper.

What, shall we pass earl Marshal by? St. xx. l. 6.

Bigod, earl marshal, who led the first line of the English, was a factious and avaricious baron, perpetually tormenting and thwarting his sovereign. At this period of the Scottish

war, he was discontented at Edward's delaying to ratify his grants to certain conquered lands, which had been promised to him.

To where his steed stood plunging near. St. XXVII. l. 8.

As Edward and his army slept on a heath to the east of Linlithgow the night previous to the battle of Falkirk, the king was struck on the side by his war-horse, which stood ready harnessed near him, and two of his ribs were broken.

NOTES ON CANTO THE FOURTH.

And shouting aloud, "To mass! to mass!" St. XXII. l. 17.

Historians relate, that Durham, who with Bassett led the second column of the English, at first moved forward to the attack as if prepared to make a gallant onset, yet all on the sudden halted, as if panic-struck, and proposed waiting till Edward with the reserve should join them; the impetuous Bassett, however, provoked at the delay, cried out, "To mass, Bishop!" and instantly charged.

Now, who was he, that coward slave? St. LXIV. l. 1.

According to Buchanan, &c. Comyn retreated with his force without striking a single blow. The secret intelligence which

existed between him and Edward, and the gold and promises of the latter, are supposed to have been the incentives to his conduct, combined with the jealousy which then prevailed amongst the Scottish chieftains. The dreadful slaughter of his countrymen which ensued seems principally attributable to this disgraceful desertion.

" *On, on, my friends!—'tis but a life!* St. LXVII. l. 8.

We may boast in our modern annals of a similar instance of gallantry to the one exhibited in the closing scene of the illustrious Stewart. When the English troops stormed Monte Video, on the 3d of February, 1807, the brave Lieutenant Colonel Vassall, of the 38th regiment, was, in advancing to the breach, fatally stopped in his ardent career by a grape-shot, which broke his leg, and eventually terminated his existence. Adored by his men, numbers rushed from their ranks to support him; but as he fell, the hero exclaimed, " Push on, my brave soldiers! It is but a leg in the service!" When the town surrendered, he cheered with his men as he lay bleeding on the ground.

Pale, pale on the plain lies every man! St. LXIX. l. 2.

The brave Stewart, endeavouring to rally and form his Selkirk bowmen, was thrown from his horse and killed. His archers crowded round his body, and almost to a man perished by his side.

NOTES ON CANTO THE FIFTH.

Nor see ye, bleaching in the blast. St. LIII. l. 1.

Wallace was brought to Westminster, where he was arraigned as a traitor, who had burned villages, stormed castles, and slaughtered many English.—" I am not a traitor," said Wallace ; " but of all the rest I am guilty !" He was executed with studied ignominy and rigour; his head was placed on a pinnacle in London, and his mangled limbs distributed over his own country.

Say, what reward can Edward give. St. LXVII. l. 7.

John Menteith, who betrayed his friend Wallace to the English, and was therefore deservedly hated by the Scots, received, amongst other rewards, the government of the castle of Dumbritton.—*Buchanan's Hist. of Scotland, vol.* 1.

THE END.

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